

Iconic Guitarist
Albert Lee



Reviews

John Hiatt
Terms of My Surrender
"These tunes have depth"



penguin eggs



còig

Issue No. 63 autumn 2014 \$5.99



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Chris smither

the jerry cans

& wallet

lemon bucket orkestra

PRIX AMBASSADEUR CULTUREL 2014

VILLE DE JOLIETTE



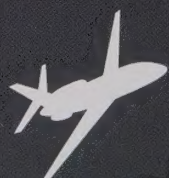
VALENCE CANNES GENÈVE LYON GRENOBLE

LONDRES GLASGOW ÉDI

PARIS OSLO CHICAGO NEW YORK JOLIETTE



YVES LAMBER
MUSICIEN



Culture
et Communications

Québec



15
Joliette



ED Chris Smither
returns to his native New
Zealand to retrace his giant
musical footsteps.

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Cover Story

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Their Gaelic name means Five – three of whom play fiddles. And they drive Cape Breton's storied fiddle tunes with boundless energy.

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PIETA BROWN PARADISE OUTLAW

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"a gifted singer-songwriter whose
lyrics are pieces of polished
poetry." —*Huffington Post*

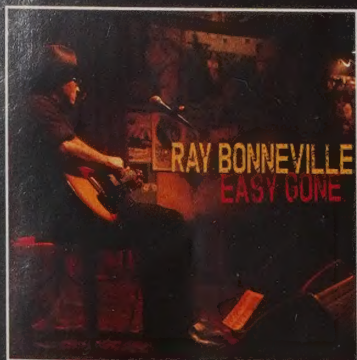
"a style and a sensuality that's all
her own." —*PopMatters*

Singer-songwriter **PIETA BROWN** delivers the finest album of her rising career. Recorded at **BON IVER**'s April Base studio, it contains her most emotionally resonant compositions and expressive performances ever. Includes a knockout duet with **AMOS LEE** and guest appearances by **JUSTIN VERNON** and **GREG BROWN**.

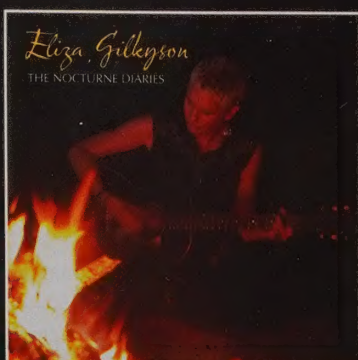
PIETA BROWN PARADISE OUTLAW



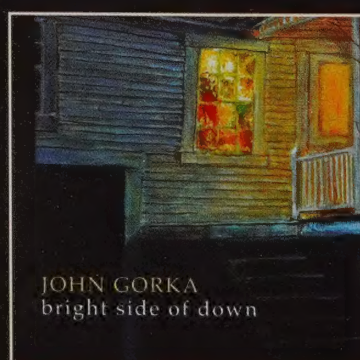
ACCLAIMED RECENT RED HOUSE BEST SELLERS!



RAY BONNEVILLE
EASY GONE



ELIZA GILKYSON
THE NOCTURNE
DIARIES



JOHN GORKA
BRIGHT SIDE OF DOWN



CARRIE ELKIN &
DANNY SCHMIDT
FOR KEEPS

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Lost Bayou Ramblers



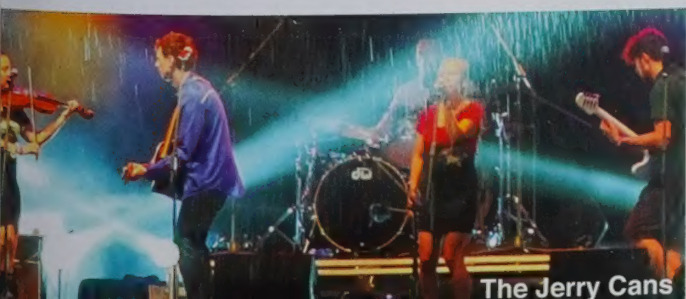
Seckou Keita and Catrin Finch



The CFMA
First Decade



Leo 'Bud' Welch



The Jerry Cans



Record Reviews: Martin & Eliza Carthy

penguin eggs

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

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Canada



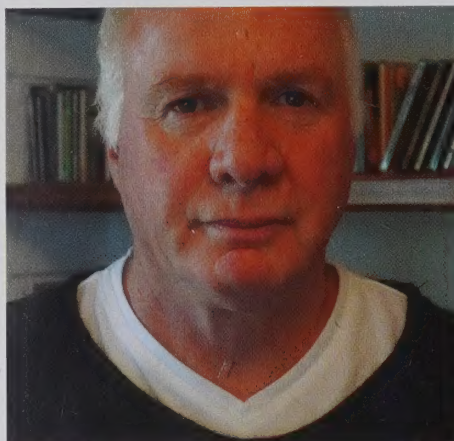
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Editoria



That's it, then. Summer's over. All the major folk festivals have come and gone. Done and dusted. Countless performances witnessed. Some extraordinary: Mandolin Orange, Bears Den, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, Amos Lee, Typhoon, Lost Bayou Ramblers, Karine Polwart ...

The latter aside, these names were pretty much new to me. But that's the main reason why I go to festivals: to discover the unfamiliar. Implicit in such adventures, of course, lies a trust in the ability of folk festival artistic directors to attract top talent, recognizable or otherwise, on a consistent basis. Most of them do. In my part of the world, Western Canada, at least.

The public's perception of festival wares, though, has its own peculiarities. Too much of the unknown and the bickering begins. At the heart of the grumbling I hear lies the common but flawed assumption that the unknown equals unworthy—a silly and futile argument that runs along the lines: "I haven't heard of them; they can't be that good." Egotistical nonsense, obviously.

But what's more worrying for me is the journalists from daily newspapers annually seconded into covering folk festivals, not for their insightful analysis or

extensive knowledge of the folk world but due to internal financial constraints. While that's a difficult hand to be dealt, their bluff writing can rankle. When confronted, it turns out that what folk festivals really need is a short, sharp shock of more indie rock band.

Most folk festivals now book likes of an Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros or an Andri Bird and the Hands of Glory. A good thing, too, for a number of reasons: they attract a younger audience and add a bit of spice and youthful exuberance. Wonderful. But everything in moderation. Every indie rock band added to a folk festival means one less folk act. And it's a slippery slope.

Take the Ottawa Bluesfest, for example. Lady Gaga, Snoop Doggy Dogg, The Killers ... headline this year's event. Not exactly your garden variety Mississippi Delta or So Side Chicago blues musicians and singers are they?

"I wish they would book Lady Gaga here," taunted Fish Griwosky of *The Edmonton Journal*. He was serious. Aside from being culturally inappropriate, the impact of Lady Gaga hardly bears pondering. Can you imagine the token one-foot-high plastic snow fence there, that current separates the audience from the stage, holding back Gaga's millions. And that's just a tiny example of the informal, heart-warming ambience that lies in the path of rock'n'roll juggernaut.

Who needs it? Ottawa, obviously. So we'll leave it with its novelty value. There's much more fun and excitement prising open doors to new musical possibilities. Let nobody convince you otherwise. Roll on next summer, the and more amazing adventures

— Roddy Campbell

Geoffrey Kelly



Geoffrey Kelly of Spirit of the West pays homage to Alan Roberts and Dougie MacLean's *Caledonia*.

The year was 1979. After a failed attempt at achieving a business management diploma, I set off on a European adventure.

I had saved hard, gave up my half of a little basement suite in North Vancouver, stored my stereo and records, liquidated my other belongings in favour of a back pack and sleeping bag, and set off for Europe with a friend, on an open-ended ticket.

We started in the U.K., bought a 1964 Volkswagen beetle and saw the British Isles in style, staying at youth hostels, often missing the curfew and sleeping in the car. We did, however, meet a lot of Europeans, mostly girls, who invited us to visit when our travels brought us to the continent.

After three months in the U.K. we made for Amsterdam, bought a Volkswagen van kitted it out with a bed and a tape deck, then hit the road. Germany, Sweden, Norway then back down to Austria to stay with Dorley, a lovely gal we'd met in England.

Paul, my cohort on the trip, and I were pretty passionate about music, if a little narrow minded. Genesis, The Allman Brothers, Dire Straits, J.J. Cale and Pink Floyd were the soundtrack to our travels.

One night Dorley informed us she had bought tickets for a folk club in a town called Lienz in the mountains. We balked at the idea of folk music, imagining fishermen's sweaters and finger in the ear twee stuff. My closest brush with folk music at that time was ... Jethro Tull.

Our host plied us with beer and then forced us into her car and off we went. Performing that night were Dougie MacLean and Alan Roberts from Scotland.

Now, being born in Scotland myself, I had been exposed to my father and his pals playing accordions upon returning from the pub, and my mother signing *Coming Through The Rye* with the sweet smell of whiskey on their breath. Fond memories but from another time.

Dougie and Alan were, in a word, magic. I was shocked at how deeply it resonated with me, so familiar, yet contemporary and new at the same time. Played by guys my age, with long hair and earrings!

We bought the album at the end of the concert (it was called *Caledonia*) and while we poured over the liner notes, Dougie came up and introduced himself. I suspect because we were with Dorley, who was rather stunning.

For the remaining days at Dorley's house, *Caledonia* was on repeat. We loved every song, *Plooboy Laddies*, *Rowan Tree*, the upbeat instrumentals, but our favourite song was Dougie's own *Caledonia*. It's really a homesickness song, and having been away about six months we felt it was for us.

Dougie's lovely, weary voice, his lilting Perthshire fiddle playing, and his unique style of finger picking the guitar were all so impressive and so inspiring. Maybe it was seeing the show and owning the record on the same day that has indelibly stamped the experience into my life.

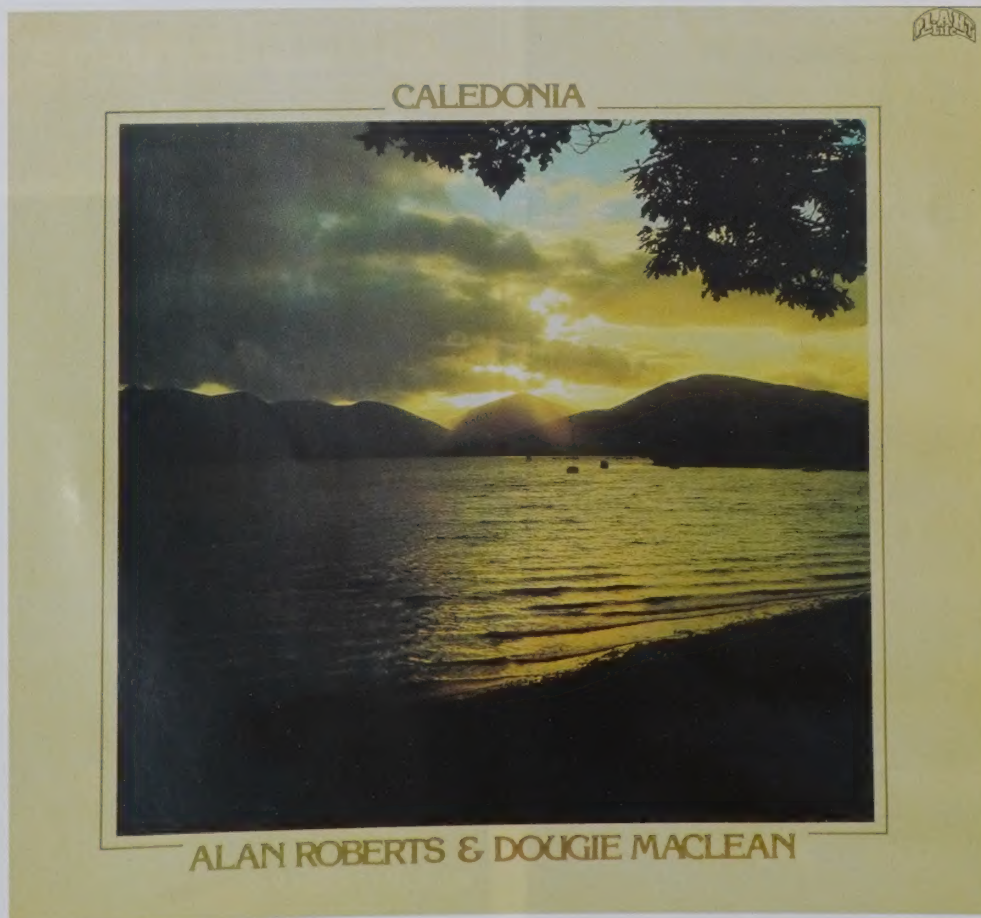
I bought a tin whistle later on that trip. We saw Dougie and Alan again by chance in Holland. I returned home at the very end of 1979, immersed myself in Scottish and Irish folk music, collecting everything I could find, discovering The Tannahill Weavers, Silly Wizard, The Bothy Band, Planxty, Dick Gaughan, and a host of others. I volunteered for years at the Vancouver Folk Festival and joined the Vancouver branch of Ceoltas Ceoltoiri Eireann (The Irish Musicians Society).

This all led to the formation of Spirit of the West and a life in music I never imagined. All from one night in the Austrian mountains of east Tyrol, and one wonderful record called *Caledonia*.

I remain good friends with Dougie to this day and will be performing at his Perthshire Amber Festival this coming October.

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Canadian
Heritage - Patrimoine
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galaxie top 10

1. Del Barber
Prairieography (True North)
2. Shari Ulrich
Everywhere I Go (Borealis)
3. Stephen Fearing & Andy White
Tea & Confidences (Lowden Proud)
4. Doug Paisley
Strong Feelings (Warners)
5. The Duhks
Beyond the Blue (Compass)
6. T. Buckley
Northern Country Soul (Independent)
7. Joe Nolan
Tornado (Six Shooter)
8. Eliza Gilkyson
The Nocturne Diaries (Red House Records)
9. Miranda Mulholland
Whipping Boy (Roaring Girl Records)
10. Irene Kelley
Pennsylvania Coal (Patio Records)

Based on the most-played folk and roots discs played nationally on Galaxie Radio throughout May, June and July, 2014.

fred's records top 5

1. Matthew Byrne
Hearts & Heroes (Independent)
2. Passenger
Whispers (Nettwerk)
3. The Once
The Once (Borealis)
4. Steve Maloney and the Wandering Kind
Steve Maloney and the Wandering Kind (Independent)
5. Kat McLevey
Drifter (Kat McLevey)

Based on album sales for May, June and July, 2014 at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 1G5



Miranda Mulholland

lizzy hoyt's all-time top 10



Lizzy Hoyt

Alison Krauss and Union Station
So Long So Wrong (Rouner)

David Francey
Far End of Summer (Laker Music)

Dolly Parton
The Grass is Blue (Sugar Hill)

Flook
Haven (Flatfish)

Lunasa
Otherworld (Green Linnet)

Maddy Prior & The Carnival Band
Tapestry of Carols (Saydisc)

Martin Hayes & Dennis Cahill
Welcome Here Again (Green Linnet/Compass Records)

Natalie MacMaster
In My Hands (Rouner)

Rankin Family
Fare Thee Well Love (Liberty)

Tony Rice
Church Street Blues (Sugar Hill)

Lizzy Hoyt's latest release is called New Lady on the Prairie. Our full review of the album runs on page 14.

wfmfms top 10

1. Matt Andersen
Weightless (Linus)
2. Shovels & Rope
O Be Joyful (Dualtone Music Group)
3. Blackie & the Rodeo Kings
South (File Under Music)
4. The Duhks
Beyond the Blue (Compass)
5. Jill Barber
Fool's Gold (Outside Music)
6. Various Artists
Celebrating The Works of Kate McGarrigle (Nonesuch)
7. The Black Keys
Turn Blue (Nonesuch)
8. Chic Gamine
City City (Distribution Select)
9. Crooked Brothers
Lawrence, Where's Your Knife? (Ais)
10. Mary Gauthier
Trouble & Love (Six Shooter)

Based on album sales for May, June and July, 2014, at the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival's Music Store, 203-Bannatyne Ave., Winnipeg, MB

highlife top 10

Toumani & Sidiki
Toumani & Sidiki (World Circuit)

Beck
Morning Phase (Capitol)

Lee Fields & the Expressions
Emma Jean (Truth & Soul Records)

Joe Driscoll & Sekou Kouyate
Faya (Cumbancha)

Soul Jazz Orchestra
Inner Fire (Strut)

Nick Cave
Push The Sky Away (Bad Seed)

Elephant Revival
These Changing Skies (Thirty Tigers)

Jack White
Lazaretto (Third Man)

Neelamjit Dhillon Quartet
Komagata Maru (Independent)

Tinariwen
Emmaar (Anti)

Based on album sales for May, June and July at
highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

permanent records top 10

Dave & Phil Alvin
Common Ground (Yep Roc)

Old Crow Medicine Show
Remedy (Nettwerk)

Sturgill Simpson
Metamodern Sounds in Country Music (Thirty Tigers)

Corb Lund
Counterfeit Blues (New West)

Jolie Holland
Wine Dark Sea (Anti)

Trampled By Turtles
Wild Animals (Thirty Tigers)

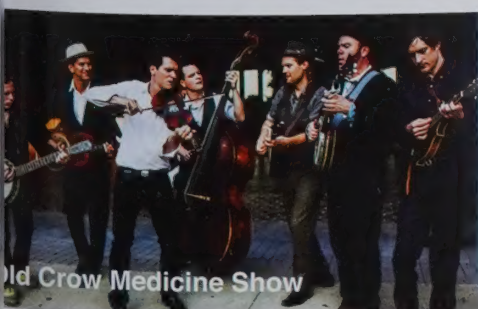
Natalie Merchant
Natalie Merchant (Nonesuch)

John Fullbright
Songs (Thirty Tigers)

Lee Fields
Emma Jean (Truth & Soul)

Gord Downie, The Sadies
Gord Downie, The Sadies, And The Conquering Sun (Arts & Crafts)

Based on album sales for May, June and July, 2014, at
Permanent Records, 8126 Gateway Blvd. Edmonton, AB, T6E 4B1



Old Crow Medicine Show



Keb Mo

sillions top 10

1. **Isabelle Boulay**
Merci Serge Reggiani (Imports)

2. **Serge Fiori**
Serge Fiori (eOne Music)

3. **Philippe B**
Ornithologie, la nuit (Independent)

4. **Gilles Vigneault**
Vivre debout (Distribution Select)

5. **Paul-Andrée Cassidy**
Libre Échange (Independent)

6. **Les Soeurs Boula**
Le poids des confettis (DEP)

7. **Hay Babies**
Mon Homesick Heart (Distribution Select)

8. **Anaïs Mitchell & Jefferson Hamer**
Child Ballads (Sony)

9. **Emilie Clepper**
Texas Eagle EP (Independent)

10. **Leyla McCalla**
Vari-Colored Songs (Distribution Select)

Based on album sales for May, June and July, 2014, at
Sillions, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Quebec, QC, G1R 2S9.

soundscapes top 10

1. **The War On Drugs**
Lost In The Dream (Secretly Canadian)

2. **Sharon Van Etten**
Are We There (Jagjaguwar)

3. **The Brothers & Sisters**
Dylan's Gospel (Light In The Attic)

4. **Courtney Barnett**
he Double EP: A Sea Of Split Peas (Mom + Pop Music)

5. **Bry Webb**
Free Will (Idée Fixe)

6. **Timber Timbre**
Hot Dreams (Arts & Crafts)

7. **First Aid Kit**
Stay Gold (Columbia)

8. **Ray Lamontagne**
Supernova (RCA)

9. **Tanya Tagaq**
Animism (Six Shooter)

10. **Various Artists**
Country Funk II: 1967-1974 (Light In The Attic)

Based on album sales for May, June and July, 2014, at
Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

ckua top 20

1. **Michael Rault**
Living Daylight (Pirates Blend)

2. **Corb Lund**
Counterfeit Blues (New West)

3. **Ray Bonneville**
Easy Gone (Red House)

4. **The Harpoonist & the Axe Murderer**
A Real Fine Mess (Independent)

5. **Keb Mo**
Blues Americana (Kind Of Blue Music)

6. **Matthew Barber**
Big Romance (Outside)

7. **Jeremy Fisher**
The Lemon Squeeze (Hidden Pony)

8. **Conor Oberst**
Upside Down Mountain (Nonesuch)

9. **Old Crow Medicine Show**
Remedy (ATO)

10. **Joe Henry**
Invisible Hour (Worksong)

11. **Lee Fields & the Expressions**
Emma Jean (Truth & Soul Records)

12. **The Mannish Boys**
Wrapped Up and Ready (Delta Groove)

13. **Justin Rutledge**
Daredevil (Outside)

14. **Janiva Magness**
Original (Fathead Records)

15. **Imelda May**
Tribal (Decca)

16. **Natalie Merchant**
Natalie Merchant (Nonesuch)

17. **Dave & Phil Alvin**
Common Ground (Yep Roc)

18. **Royal Southern Brotherhood**
Heartsoulblood (Ruf)

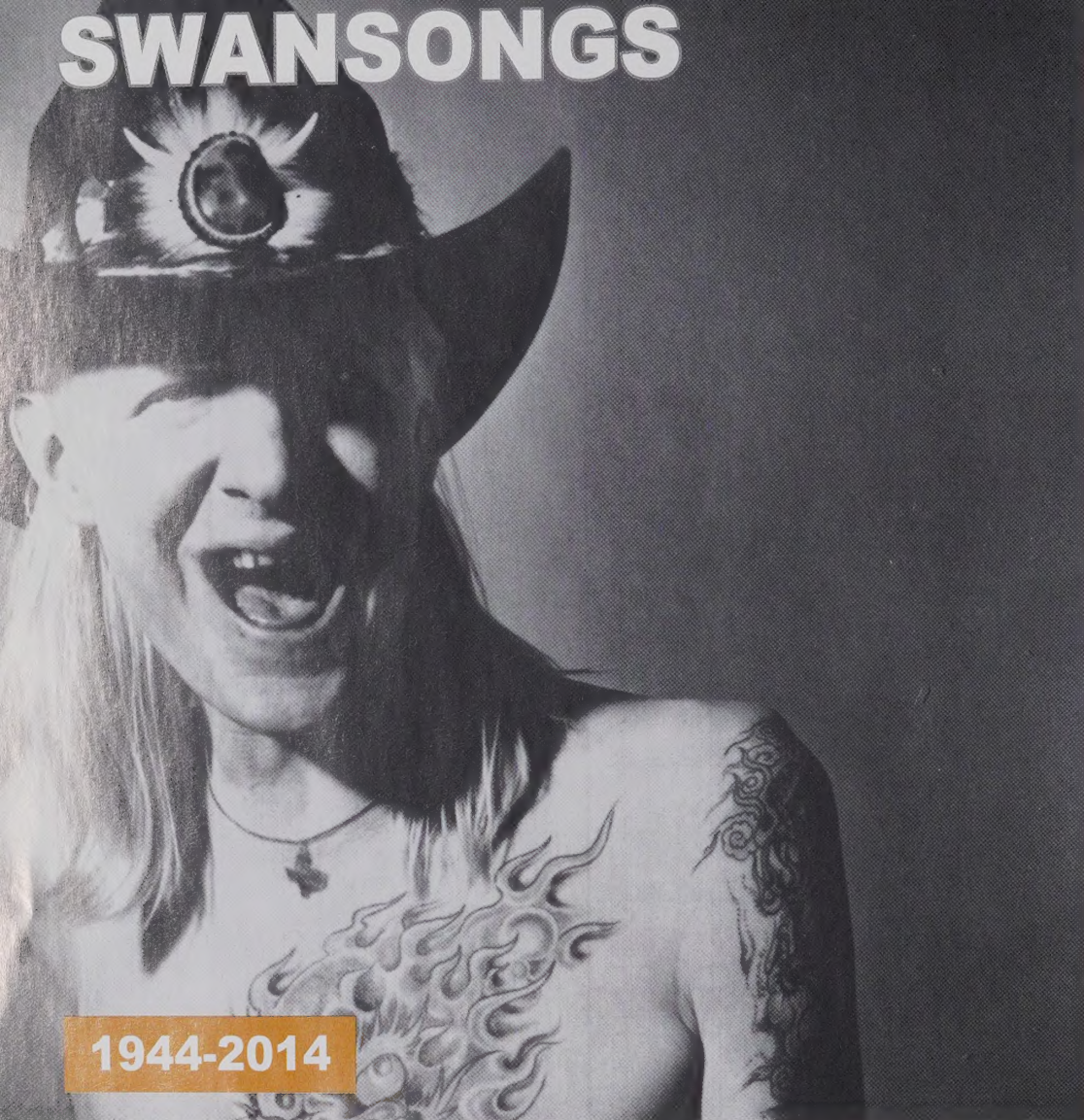
19. **John Hiatt**
Terms Of My Surrender (New West)

20. **John Mayall**
A Special Life (Forty Below)

Based on the most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA
radio - www.ckua.org - throughout May, June and July, 2014.



Tanya Tagaq



1944-2014

Johnny Winter

Johnny Winter, the dynamic Texas blues guitarist best known for his breakneck slide guitar virtuosity, died in his hotel room in Zürich, Switzerland, July 16. The cause of death remained unknown at press time. He was 70.

Winter, one of the first American blues-rock guitar icons, would inspire the likes of John Lennon, Mick Jagger, Eric Clapton, and fellow Texan Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Winter enjoyed a strong regional following across the southern U.S. when a *Rolling Stone* magazine feature on the Texas music scene in 1968 catapulted him to national prominence. It colourfully described him as: “a 130-lb cross-eyed albino with long fleecy hair playing some of the gutsiest fluid blues guitar you ever heard”.

Mike Bloomfield read that article and invited Winter to sing and play at a Bloomfield and Al Kooper concert in New York in December 1968. Representatives from Columbia Records were in the audience and promptly signed Winter to their label for \$600,000—by far the most lucrative deal at that time.

John Dawson Winter III was born on Feb. 23, 1944, and raised in Beaumont, TX. He was the older brother of Edgar Winter, who enjoyed modest success with the Edgar Winter Group. Both brothers had albinism and took to music at a very early age, spending hours listening to the local deejay, J.P. Richardson—The Big Bopper of *Chantilly Lace* fame—and became hooked on ’50s rock’n’roll. Johnny played clarinet, ukulele, and eventually guitar before cutting his first single, *School Day Blues*, at age 15 for Dart Records under the moniker Johnny and The Jammers. He would release several more singles before his first taste of chart success with a version of *Harlem Shuffle*, recorded in 1965 by his then band The Traits. Released on Scepter Records, it spent two weeks on the Billboard Hot 100.

Meanwhile, Winter had discovered Clarence Garlow’s local swamp blues and Cajun show on Radio KJET. Garlow had an R&B hit in 1950 with the now zydeco standard *Bon Ton Roula*. Winter subsequently discovered Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, John Lee Hooker ...

and gave up pop for a blues-rock power trio completed by drummer Red Turner and bassist Tommy Shannon. Together they would put their own spin on such blues classics as *Rolling and Tumblin’*, *Bad Luck and Trouble* and *Cold Morning*, *Little Schoolgirl*.

Albums such as *Johnny Winter* (1969) and *Second Winter* (1969) elevated him into an arena-level concert draw. He played Woodstock.

But in 1970, Winter fired Turner and Shannon and hired members of The McCoys, renowned for their worldwide bubblegum hit *Hang On Sloopy*. Their ranks included Rick Derringer on second guitar. As Johnny Winter And The Winter Band, they released a self-titled studio album that fared poorly, and a live follow-up that went gold.

While Winter recorded *Silver Train*, written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, and *Roll and Roll People*, written by John Lennon, there is now debate whether the authors wrote these songs for Winter as once was speculated. Nevertheless, both the Rolling Stones and the Beatles considered themselves fans.

Through the constant strain of touring, Winter developed a heroin habit that took nine months in rehab in New Orleans to curb. To celebrate his return to health, he released *Still Alive and Well* (1973)—one of his best-selling albums. A second live Winter album, *Captured Live*, was released in 1976 and features an extended performance of Bob Dylan’s *Highway 61 Revisited*. Dylan was so impressed he asked Winter to play it at Madison Square Garden, New York, in 1999 as he celebrated 30 years as a recording artist.

In 1977, though, Winter fulfilled one of his boyhood dreams and began working with his hero, blues legend Muddy Waters. Winter subsequently produced and played on Waters’ album *Hard Again* (1977). That collaboration resurrected Waters’s career. It won a Grammy, as did two other Winter-produced Waters albums: *I’m Ready* (1978) and *Muddy “Mississippi” Waters—Live* (1979).

But as interest in the blues waned in the 1980s, so too did Winter’s career. His heroin and methadone addictions resurfaced and he wobbled through a battle these demons for nearly 25 years. He would record sporadically until his death for a variety of labels and earn three Grammy nominations: *Let Me In* (1991), *Hey, Where’s My Brother?* (1992) and *I’m A Bluesman* (2000).

Prior to his death, he began promoting *Still Back*, an album of collaborations set for release on Sept. 2. It features Eric Clapton, Billy Gibbons (ZZ Top), Joe Perry (Aerosmith), Dr. John, and others.

Johnny Winter was inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1988.

— Roddy Campbell

Buddy MacMaster

Cape Breton Fiddle Doyen

Born 1924

Teenage fiddlers Vincent and Buddy MacMaster had never clapped eyes on each other before. But to play together for a dance in the one-room school in Judique, Cape Breton, would earn each the princely sum of four dollars. And a fella could buy a new fiddle for that kind of fee in 1938. This begins a feature I wrote on Buddy MacMaster for the very first printed issue of *Penguin Eggs* in 2001. The dance described was MacMaster's first paid performance. Flush with his fee, he took the train home to Judique that night rather than pay a quarter for a rickety bus ride. That train—The Judique Flyer—would provide the title of MacMaster's third album. Released in 2000, and full of subtle but musical grace, hypnotic syncopation, and exquisite tone, *The Judique Flyer* made *Mojo* magazine's Top 10 folk albums of 2001. He was 76 years old at the time.

MacMaster died Aug. 20 at his home in Judique, NS, just two months shy of his 90th birthday.

Possibly the most influential of Cape Breton's storied fiddlers, Hugh Allan (Buddy) MacMaster was born Oct. 18, 1924, into a Gaelic-speaking family in the northern Ontario mining town of Timmins. The MacMasters, however, left there for a farm near Judique when Buddy turned four.

"I was 11 when I first picked up the violin," Buddy told me. "But I can remember when I was four, or a little younger, pretending to be playing the violin with two little sticks."

Judique fiddler Alexander MacDonnell was a particular influence on the young MacMaster. MacDonnell played by ear but later learned to read music, as would his apprentice.

Music, though, remained a pastime. And MacMaster began work as a telegrapher and union agent for the Canadian National Railway in 1943. While he held various positions before retiring in 1988, he provided the fiddle music for local dances on many a weekend. This traditional dance music originated in Scotland but evolved differently on Cape Breton. This contrast separates local fiddlers from elsewhere.

Each player plays somewhat different, with different feelings," he told me. "Your touch and co-ordination is a bit like handwriting, I suppose. It's pretty hard to explain that but personal feeling—your makeup—seems to come out in your music."

The first known recording of MacMaster was



taped during a visit to Detroit in 1949. It took another 40 years, however, before he made his first album, *Judique on the Floor* (1989). And he followed that with *Glencoe Hall* (1991).

"I didn't do much until I was up in years," he said in typical modest manner. "I was approached many times but I never did record until 1989 and that was my first. I did two sets then. I never thought I was much good at it. Maybe I'm not the best. I never dared to record."

Despite his lack of recordings, MacMaster's reputation as a virtuoso traditional fiddler spread throughout Cape Breton. Foremost an interpreter of tunes rather than a writer, he would inspire a whole generation of local fiddlers including his niece, Natalie MacMaster, and her cousin, Ashley MacIsaac.

"Buddy put Cape Breton fiddle music on the map," Natalie MacMaster recently told the *National Post*.

"I thought he was the best," Ashley MacIsaac confided in *Penguin Eggs* in 2001. "That clean

sound, and it was driving, and it was rhythmic, and very stately, you know, the way he would play. I always liked that. It looked like he was the king."

MacMaster would record a mere two more discs—*Cape Breton Tradition* (2003) and *Traditional Music from Cape Breton Island* (2005) with Natalie MacMaster—before age and creeping infirmity ate away at his abilities.

For his exceptional contributions to traditional fiddle music, Buddy MacMaster's many honours include the Order of Canada (2000), Order of Nova Scotia (2003), and the East Coast Music Awards' Dr. Helen Creighton Lifetime Achievement Award (2006). He was the first non-Briton inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame (2006). And in February, he became only the third Canadian to receive the U.S. Folk Alliance International Lifetime Achievement Award.

He leaves behind a wife, Marie, and two children, Allan and Mary.

— Roddy Campbell

Troy Greencorn

As Hurricane Arthur sped towards Nova Scotia, organizers of the 18th Stan Rogers Folk Festival faced an agonizing decision: to cancel the entire three-day event two days before the gates opened on July 4. This they duly did. Performers scheduled to appear included Ani DiFranco, Sam Baker, and Garnet Rogers.

The approaching winds peaked at 120 kilometres per hour that weekend and left more than 150,000 homes without electricity in Nova Scotia, P.E.I., and New Brunswick. Arthur also left the Canso-based folk festival on the brink of a financial precipice. Now, its artistic director, Troy Greencorn, recaps the momentous decision to call off the event, the tremendous economic implications created by the storm, and the unmitigated resolve for the festival to 'rise again' in 2015.

— Roddy Campbell.

When did you first hear about the potential implications of the storm?

About two days before we made the decision to cancel. The initial reports were: 'There's a storm and it's potentially heading for Atlantic Canada. The next day: 'The storm's building. It's a category one; it's going to be a category two. It's on a direct trajectory for Atlantic Canada. Here's what we are expecting: 100 kilometres-an-hour winds and 100 millimetres of rain within a 12-hour period'. That was the Monday and Tuesday forecast. On Wednesday when I

woke up I could hear and feel the change in the weather. I've lived in this community my whole life—your sixth sense kicks in. I headed off to the festival office and got in touch with Environment Canada and explained our plight and the size and scope of what we were producing. And to their credit they quickly elevated us to a senior meteorologist who gave me a very specific forecast for our area. Before I got off the phone I knew what the decision had to be.

We wanted to let all of the artists know first in as personal a way as we could, given that we were racing against time and social networks. First were performers and then our suppliers. Once we dealt with that we had to take the site apart in two days, which took 10 days to build. We had some artists that were already in the air. Some were in a real pickle. They didn't have other work; they came just for us. There were other artists that were coming for fairly significant tours. They then had two or three days with no work and cost. It just goes on and on from that.

We were thinking about our audience. As it was, there were hundreds who were already on their way. What really blew me away was I haven't encountered one person who questioned our decision or been critical or negative—without exception. Even local businesses.

This is a town of 800 people and 12,000 people come over these three days. It's the epitome of the one-horse town. There's one convenience store that sells ice and pop and

cigarettes. That small business had \$40,000 worth of inventory built up for that weekend. There's one gas station with four pumps and their tanks were loaded to the brim. For a lot of them the business [during the festival] is 30 to 40 per cent of their year. Their biggest worry is how can the festival survive.

Our budget these days is about \$600,000. I'm confident that this will cause for us, I'm estimating it is at least a third. But there's just so much support and resolve to ride this out. Not only have we considered that this might be the end, we wouldn't accept that.

So the festival will go on next year?

It definitely will—one hundred per cent. This is a success story that has been building for 17 years. This was to be the 18th festival so the momentum alone is enough reason to carry on. The need for the community's perspective is another. The show goes on. But it's going to be our toughest year ever. We were coming into year 18 with a deficit. So we have quickly begun to fund raise. It took us a couple of months but we got a crowdfunding platform up and running and that's been very successful—it raised for \$30,000.

How can people contribute to this?

They can visit our website. There's a new posting there that describes our crowdfunding plan. One of the things we quickly did was go back to our audience with the whole issue of refunds. The big question is how do we deal with that in a responsive way, that treats our audience fairly and with the respect that they deserve, while keeping in mind our financial situation? What we did: any ticket or campsite purchase was entitled to a refund. And at the same time we offered two other alternative options. One, we replace tickets and camping for the same next year. Two, the patron could also relinquish a refund and that would be taken as a donation.

A lot of our patrons have been gracious and said, 'Look we didn't get our festival this year but we want to make sure it's there next year.' We've had great support from the folk community across the country. Within an hour we were hearing from other festivals and industry people. Already donations have flowed in, and helping to close that gap. Some organizations have offered to host a fundraiser on our behalf and donate the funds. There's going to be a lot of activity and every dollar is so appreciated. We are planning a major event in August or September, likely in Halifax.

www.stanfest.com

With over 3000 members worldwide, Folk Alliance International has developed into the major global folk music organisation. Founded in 1989, 'to nurture, engage and empower the international folk music community,' FAI currently resides in Kansas City, MI. There its annual conference attracts essentially anyone with an interest in the varied artistic and business aspects of the folk world. It offers numerous showcases, panels, workshops, mentoring, key-note speakers such as Graham Nash and Al Gore, as well as an extensive exhibit hall. And now Canadian, Aengus Finnan is its executive director. Finnan, a former Touring and Audience Development Officer for the Ontario Arts Council, a past president of the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals, a founder of the Shelter Valley Folk Festival and a somewhat touring and recording musician, took up the new position July 1.

— Roddy Campbell.

What inspired you to apply for the job?

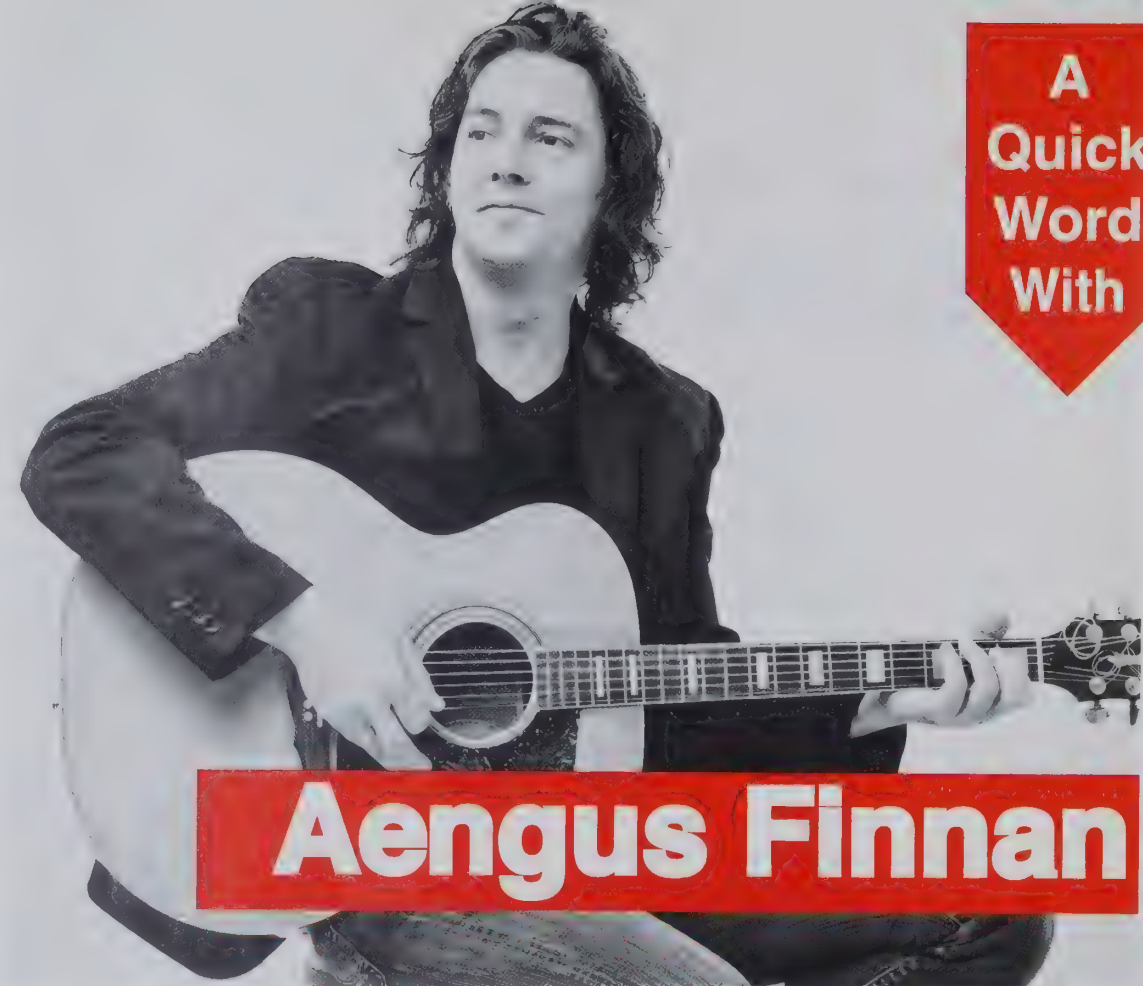
The Folk Alliance International is an amazing organization. But I also think it has some brave things to do, to really open up. I think there's a huge responsibility and opportunity in bringing new voices and new perspectives to the organization.

My work, as I see it over the next few years, is to professionalize the operations of Folk Alliance so that it functions as efficiently and effectively as possible, such that it provides better service and expanded activity beyond the conference, for all who work within the folk community internationally. We've offered great workshops but there's a need to know what artists want so that everyone's time is well spent.

Are there more things that Folk Alliance could be facilitating, or supporting, or providing on a year round basis? For example, if an artist was coming over from Europe and wants to approach presenters in Canada or the US, right now, we don't have an effective way of providing them with a list of which ones would be appropriate to apply to: which one's would be out of their league, which one's book a year. I'd want to make sure that we were presenting the right information so that you don't see a bluegrass artist applying to a presenter who doesn't book bluegrass. We can do that.

Coming from Canada, what unique perspective do you bring to the Folk Alliance?

There's a real mixing of cultures in Canada in the musical community. There's a real



diversity in culture. It's more ingrained in how we program festivals and how artists collaborate: world music with folk, aboriginal, the dynamics between English and French. It is an imbedded part at how we look at culture. And I would say that there are some lessons to be learned from that which I really encourage Folk Alliance to explore. I sat on a panel in Toronto and it was me and three other white guys my age. While we were all completely qualified to be there, it reminded me that there are benefits of looking at what is missing if we don't have a woman on that panel, or if we don't have someone outside the cultural context of the four white guys. Something I want to achieve is how our organization sees that blend and to look at what we do and consider who else could be at the table.

How will Canadians benefit from having you in the position you are?

It'll mean an assurance that everyday, at every meeting I'm at, there's a representation of Canada, someone who is looking from the Canadian perspective, that Canadians' plans and ideas are put forward and, where appropriate, integrated into what we are doing. There is a need to continue to engage, and frankly improve, the interaction and involvement of Canada. The other thing for Canadians is that they have someone at the helm who cares deeply about Canadian presenters, artists and

industry within the office and activity of Folk Alliance

Ideally, what would you like to achieve at Folk Alliance?

Now, more than ever the world needs folk music. The issues may have shifted over the years but poverty, environmental concerns, political injustice, civil rights, war and inequality all continue to flourish. So too must the brave and beautiful voices of folk to set things right, or at least place them in the public consciousness in constructive ways. It's fine to entertain, or focus on the next gig, or the sponsors required to pull off events, but there is a deeper need in the world than just another record or show. Folk musicians and organizers have a very unique and important role to play. The opportunity and responsibility shouldn't be squandered, and I hope to see Folk Alliance International support the voice and spirit of the folk tradition that has stood for social justice, peace, equality, and conservation throughout time. It is the defining difference between a community and an industry.

When will we see the Folk Alliance conference return to Canada?

2019. It's a five-year contract in Kansas City. 2019 will be the return to Canada. The site selection process is now underway.

Introducing Lizzy Hoyt



New *Lady on the Prairie*, the excellent new Lizzie Hoyt album, is an important milestone in a musical career going back to her childhood. “People ask how I got into music but I didn’t really—it was always around.” Her professional career began at age 15, playing fiddle and mandolin with ‘Canada’s Cowgirl’, Eli Barsi, for 10 years.

It took some time before she found her own voice. “People kept telling me, ‘You really have to learn to sing louder’. I remember my feelings being hurt. Then someone said, ‘Don’t listen to them—you should listen to Alison Krause’. So I did. I said, ‘Yeah, that’s right, I can sing like this if I want to!’ . It was important for me to realize it was fine to use your voice in a way that comes naturally to you.”

There are strong family connections that run throughout *New Lady on the Prairie*. “I grew up in Alberta so there was always country music. My family has been in Canada for a couple of generations but every time I hear Celtic music there’s a really intense connection.”

The title track is a story from her grandmother, the family historian. “It’s about her aunt immigrating to Canada from Ireland in the early 1900s. She came over by boat and train and then she took a horse and buggy up to Northern Alberta. She finally got to this log cabin in the middle of nowhere where she is going to live and she sat down on the front porch and cried. It struck me how that would actually feel—the courage to go out to this new area when you don’t know anyone and how lonely that would be. In the photos there’s something very dignified about her—she looks like a very strong young woman. *White Feather* is about her brother who was sent a white feather when he didn’t enlist—so he signed up and then was killed at the Somme. His mother came running down the stairs and then said, ‘Where’s James, I just heard him call my name?’ . A few weeks later they got the letter to say he was killed in action.”

The conversation shifts to her co-producer, John Reischman. “I was wracking my brain about who to work with. He stood out because I knew he was a sensitive musician. He would listen to the song first before coming up with any ideas how it should be done. He would keep it all cohesive. If I felt strongly about something

I didn’t feel intimidated at putting forth my ideas. It was really empowering for me as an artist.”

One surprising inclusion on the CD is an old, much-derided chestnut. “I had an Irish fiddler come up to me and say, ‘I feckin hate *Danny Boy* ... but your version made me cry’. Absolutely I had trepidation about doing it. At the same time, it’s beautiful and I’m confident that what I am doing is from the heart.” About that, there is no doubt.

— By Tim Readman

“I had an Irish fiddler come up to me and say, ‘I feckin hate *Danny Boy* ... but your version made me cry’.”





Introducing Alanna Gurr

Most musicians need a backup plan. When the time comes that the songs don't pay all the bills, a second, fall-back career is always a good option. For song slinger Alanna Gurr, she made sure music still factored into her chosen day job as a piano tuner.

The Guelph, ON-based musician attended the University of Western Ontario for media studies and broadcasting. While she enjoyed the courses, music was a constant distraction. She met some fellow students in the piano technician program and a new career path opened up.

"I fell in love with the idea of owning a small business, working with my hands, working with an instrument and being able to travel with a trade," she explains. "We've been getting very positive reviews to our album and I will always continue to play music but piano tuning felt like such a good fit whether my music career works out or not."

With *Late at Night*, released this past May, Gurr is certainly in tune with her muse. The disc, recorded with her sleepy, minimalist folk band The Greatest State, features eight songs that linger long after the sun's gone down. Gurr's first release since *Oh Horsefeathers* (2011), the songs were recorded live off the floor at Toronto's Candle Studios and later the vocals, pedal steel, extra guitars, and organ were layed down at Welland, ON's Tapes and Plates (Weather Station, Grey Kingdom). The songs are sparse in the instrumentation and melodies but not in the meanings; beautiful hooks and velvet vocals snare you like a lobsterman's trap.

Like many musicians today, Gurr turned to her fans via social media—and a Kickstarter campaign—to pay for her latest disc. The songwriter says using this funding formula was a necessity.

"We had money saved from shows over the past year but still did not have enough to record, mix, master, and print the album," Gurr explains. "We had enough songs to record and people had been asking about where they could hear the new stuff so Kickstarter felt like the best way to raise the funds and let our wonderful supporters help us make the record by pre-ordering it."

Gurr set an initial goal of \$4,000 and surpassed this amount, allowing the band to print 300 CDs and 300 vinyl. "I was overwhelmed with the support we received from friends, family and fans," she adds. "Even though it was a learning curve, social media was a giant help to our Kickstarter campaign."

Appropriately titled *Late at Night*, the disc offers the listener a sleepy and pleasing journey. The sound recalls the famed Neil Young quote about recording *Helpless* in the wee hours of the morn only after the rest of the band was so tired and mellow to match his mood.

"Most of my songs I write while at home and most on the album while late at night so I thought it was a fitting title," Gurr says.

"I also like the idea of it being an early-morning or late-at-night listen as that is my favourite time to listen to other albums as well. I gave homemade biscotti and tea packages with the pre-ordered album from our Kickstarter package to try and get listeners in the mood!"

– By David McPherson

Late Night ... features eight songs that linger long after the sun's gone down.





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FACT



Introducing Andino Suns

Andrés (Andy) Davalos will tell you that the members of Andino Suns originally got together to explore the music of his Chilean forefathers. Five years on, he's come to realize how he and the band are really: musically sons of two nations, Chile and Canada.

As the lead singer explains, the band's sound comes from several different streams:

"We borrow from the indigenous musicians of the Andes and use many of the same instruments, and we also draw on the *nuevo canción* or "new song" movement that began in Latin America in the 1960s. But we have songs in Spanish and English, and now we've been able to expand, to bring in some of the rockin' feel that we know from being Canadians, too."

Now on their second album, *It's Time To Rise*, they have added electric guitar and drums, mixing a little rock in with their original acoustic folk sound, vocal harmonies, and upbeat Latin grooves. The new septet sound is at times reminiscent of Latin crossover acts such as Los Lobos, even as it continues to draw from early, key inspirations such as Chile's pioneering group Inti Illimani.

In Andino Suns you're also hearing a shared experience from two generations of family and friends. The original members include Andy Davalos, his older brother Pablo, Pablo's son Antonio, and friend Andrés Palmas, who between them share a set guitars, the mandolin-like charango, the big bombo drum and other traditional hand percussion, and the zampona (panpipe flutes).

Other Canadian members of the group have adopted Latin American culture, too. Bassist Erik and conga percussionist Leif (the band's two "Viking brothers" Andy jokes) have learned Spanish since they joined in 2011. Drummer Brian Warren, the newest addition, has been an enthusiastic supporter of Andino Suns since he produced the group's first music video in 2012.

"I'm not sure that this unique mix is anything that's ever been done."

Andy is the youngest and only Canadian-born child of Chilean refugees who came to Canada following Chile's military coup of 1973. His father was an academic who endured prison and torture over 18 months for being a supporter of the ousted government of Salvador Allende, before the family was able to leave their homeland to settle in Saskatchewan in 1975.

The son fondly remembers growing up in a house that "was like being in Chile" thanks to his parents' music collection. He's been to Chile regularly since the dictatorship ended in 1989 and taught there for a year. As you might guess, those strong ties are echoed in themes of freedom and social justice that sit at the core of the band's songs. For instance, *Sueno Feliz* (A Beautiful Dream) is dedicated to Allende, and the cover of *It's Time To Rise* shows a raised (left-handed) fist.

That said, he feels their songs are "not sad so much as hopeful". Andino Suns are based in Regina, and the members' collective experience takes in growing up on the Canadian prairie with time in rock'n'roll and rhythm'n'blues bands. They leave plenty of room for their infectious will to party.

"We started as a simple project to play some Andean songs and see if we could get some gigs but it's gotten way, way bigger than we ever imagined, playing some awesome festivals. We have a game plan and bigger dreams now, too. We're always moving forward, climbing up that mountain."

— By Roger Levesque



Introducing Red June



When it's time for Red June to add their spine-tingling harmonies to a song, they all gather around a single mic. Standing cheek to cheek, they let fly with a sound that's as old as the North Carolina hills they live in, with a trace of your favourite indie rock band added for good measure.

"We all come at the music from different directions," says singer, guitarist, and mandolin player John Cloyd Miller. "My grandfather, Jim Shumate, was a fiddler with Bill Monroe and Flatt & Scruggs. In high school, I played Led Zep covers. Will (Straughan, slide guitar) has a roots-rock background and (fiddler) Natalya (Weinstein) started on classical violin, switching to bluegrass in college. We all have an eclectic mix of interests and styles."

Despite his close connection to authentic bluegrass, Miller never felt an affinity for the music growing up. "I was too close to it, so I took it for granted. When I graduated from Appalachian State University in Boone (NC), I moved out to Utah. After I taught myself mandolin, I started to appreciate my heritage."

Following an open-mic performance singing and playing mandolin, a member of Lo-Fi Breakdown approached Miller and asked him to join the band. "We played bluegrass festivals while holding down full-time jobs but it was great fun; a good learning experience. After a few years, I moved back home. The rest of the band slowly trickled back to North Carolina as well."

Natalya Weinstein joined Lo-Fi Breakdown shortly before the band fell apart. "We had a good rapport, so when Lo-Fi came to an end, we played together as a duo. We both knew Will and, the first time we played together, it worked. Will's an intuitive musician, good at backing up singers and knows how to put the right notes in the right place. He's a baritone and finds the perfect third part when we sing harmonies. When we met, he played me some of his songs and I thought they were great. I said, 'We ought to start a band and make records'."

They did just that. *Ancient Dreams* is their third album of original material, an outing rich with nuance, showcasing the band's many strengths. There's an a cappella hymn, *I Am Free*, the melancholy cowboy

ballad *Saddle Up My Son*, Weinstein's torchy delivery of the yearning ballad *I Still Wait*, and *Gabriel's Storm*, a Celtic flavoured folk/rock rave up with a sharp edge, albeit played on acoustic instruments.

"When we rock, we just hit the strings hard," Miller laughs. "We use a lot of dynamics, moving between quiet moments and loud moments. Restrained tension is our way to rock out."

The band chose Red June as their moniker to honour a variety of heirloom apples from the North Carolina/Tennessee area. "We all have an interest in sustainable agriculture and environmentalism. We wanted a name that was cool and enigmatic, to serve as an entry point to open up a discussion about roots and culture."

— By J. Poet





Introducing Colleen Rennison

We can thank Colleen Rennison's parents for her debut solo album, *See the Sky Above the Rain*. Already a known quantity as the lead singer of No Sinner (Rennison spelled backwards), a Vancouver-based rock band where she gets to act out her every bad-to-the-bone impulse, at least lyrically, Rennison was hankering for something a little less in-your-face for her always supportive mom and dad.

"They're always there for me, but No Sinner is definitely not parent music," she laughs over the phone from her B.C. abode. "At least most parents. I wanted something that showed another side of me, that looked at what I grew up on, what my parents would have listened to as well."

The result is *See the Sky Above the Rain*, the title suggested by producer/guitarist Steve Dawson, who also shepherded Rennison through the process of choosing the 12 songs that made the final track list. Mostly Canadian songwriters, all close to Rennison's heart, with deep cuts from Neil Young (the title track) and Joni Mitchell (*Coyote*) and The Band (*All La Glory* and *Stage Fright*.)

"I was a huge fan of (The Band's) *The Last Waltz* so *Stage Fright* was an easy one to change. It's taken on so much more meaning since I got older, too, just meeting all of these music scene characters and understanding what the song is about. You can dissect the meaning verse by verse with lines like 'Fancy people go drifting by' and 'Just one more nightmare you can stand'. Yeah, it makes way more sense now."

One particular highlight of the album is her cover of The Blue Shadows' *The Fool is the Last to Know*. Rennison's father was a huge fan of vocalist Billy Cowsill, and the album *On the Floor of Heaven* a staple in the household that obviously seared Cowsill's songwriting in her head.

"I could do an entire album of Billy Cowsill covers," she exclaims. "People just have no idea how amazing that man was, and what a great country voice he had."

Townes Van Zandt was another no-brainer, with Rennison choosing a song that struck close to home.

"*White Freightliner* has all these undertones to it. It's like he's making these statements, telling a story without actually telling a story; everybody has experienced that feeling, where they needed to take off and be someone else somewhere else."

No Sinner continues on, with a growing audience among blues fans, something that Rennison finds a little mystifying but understands given her band's roots in basic rock'n'roll. She's not willing to pander to the crowd but she does acknowledge that she's grateful for the attention. The question is, if she had a repeat opportunity to make another solo album with Steve Dawson would she head down the same path and choose a batch of other people's songs? The answer is absolutely.

"Oh, I would love to keep doing this," she quickly responds. "I would do covers until the cows come home. There are so many amazing songs out there that people don't know, hell, that I don't know. It's almost embarrassing to try and write music when there are so many great pieces that have been lying dormant; to bring life to an old song is a privilege."

– By Tom Murray



Tubthumping

One of the last traditional bluesmen newly discovered in the backwoods of Mississippi.

— By Bruce Mason

Leo ‘Bud’ Welch

There are all sorts of reasons why Leo (Bud) Welch’s music wasn’t discovered until he was more than 80 years of age. Among them is church. Another is logging. So are missed opportunities, hard work, and even harder luck, until he met his first-ever manager, whom he’s nicknamed “Big Money”.

However, a year after his first recording, *Sabougla Voices*, in 2013, the world is beginning to beat a path to the door of the Mississippi gospel blues singer/guitarist, as far back in the woods as one can get in 21st century North America, embracing him as “the real deal” and a “world treasure”.

“You see all those people out there in one place at one time; that’s as many all together as I’ve seen in my whole life,” he said, standing at the edge of a stage at the Vancouver Island MusicFest in July. His hot pink electric guitar emblazoned with his name in stick-on black and gold letters is strapped over a shoulder, stooped from 35 years of cutting timber on riverbanks.

“I still get around good, don’t walk with no stick or nothin’, get up and dance when it moves me,” he adds, adjusting his ball cap and running his hands over one of the suits and ties he wears when performing. “All of a sudden there’s more money than I ever made in my life. I needed something to come along easier for me. Thank God, I got it going. I’m hoping to get a place bigger than one room and enough closet to hang my clothes.”

His hearing is slightly impaired from chain-

saws he’s carried as close and as often as a guitar but when introduced, Leo spins, waving with tenacious energy, front and centre, as if on fire, shouting back, “This is only the beginning”.

Backstage, holding Welch’s guitar case and grinning and nodding in agreement, is ever-present and attentive Vencie Varnado, who hangs on every note of *Jesus, On the Mainline* and *Got My Mojo Workin’*. In his 50s, retired after a military career, Varnado brushes aside the “Big Money” moniker.

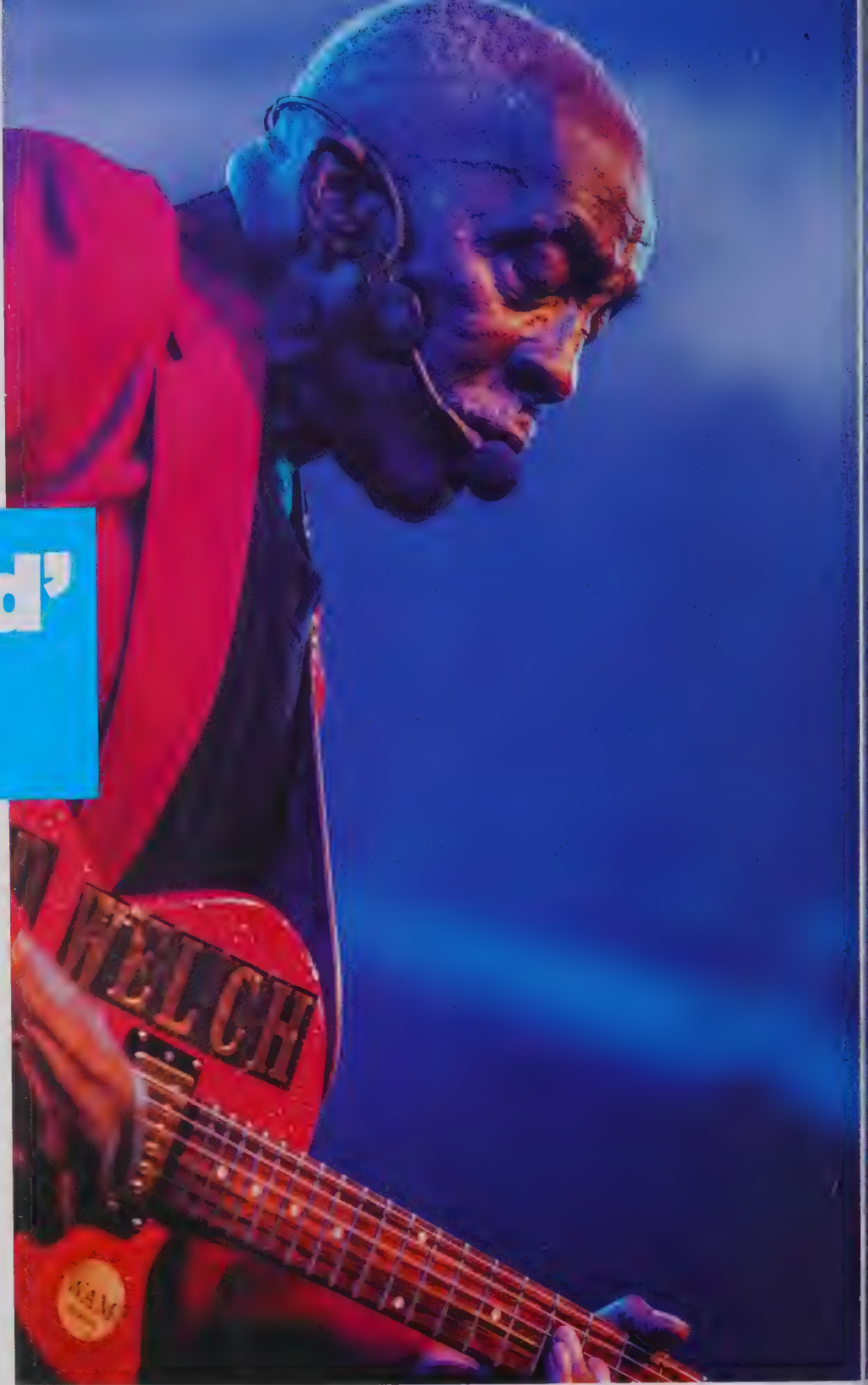
He has a new mission. “Long as Leo’s happy, that’s what counts,” says Vencie. “He’s the last traditional bluesman, the last tree in a stand of

cut timber. Helpin’ is my way of giving b

Joining us, MusicFest producer Doug C who gets thousands of emails from artists agents each year—observes: “This doesn’t happen anymore: finding an original artist in an isolated culture. When Vencie’s message popped up in my inbox, I was hooked on the story, as well as the music, booked him here and also contacted the Vancouver Folk Festival.”

“Something else that’s rare to experience is the respect, even reverence that other musicians and audiences are giving him,” added C. who also tours the world as a slide guitarist as the applause died down.

After the performance, signing CDs un-



ornado's watchful eye, folks lined up as if approaching something small, something believed to be extinct. "What took me so long? I had nobody depending on going out there and getting me started. Couldn't get nobody—get a helping hand," Leo explains.

Welch was born in Sabougla (pronounced shah-boog-lah), MS, in 1932 and raised with four brothers and seven sisters. The population remained relatively unchanged since 1890 in the unincorporated community in Calhoun County, which he has called home for his entire life. "Nothing but a two-store spot, wasn't even a post office, no law in town, all just country people, and my home in the middle of a field somewhere," he recalls.

When his cousin, R.C., saved up seven dollars for a mail-order guitar, 17-year-old Leo picked it up from the nearest post office. "I was told not to mess with it but R.C. took to courtin' we called it. I started wailin' and singin' on it and listening to all kinds of music on the radio. By the time he caught me, he said it was OK, because I was better than him.

"When I got big enough, we'd play house parties and three-day picnics with ball games out in the woods. I'd have to walk, sling my guitar over my back, and down the road I'd go. People would drop nickels, dimes, and quarters in my pockets and even in the hole in my guitar. I'd get home and have to shake all the money out."

Welch settled in Bruce, which boasts *Where Money Grows in Trees* and *Hopes and Dreams Never Die*. Named for E.L. Bruce, the hardwood mill magnate, the town of 2,000 is home to seven mills and runs on their whistles. The nearest Interstate (I-55) is almost 20 miles away and the closest town of any significance—Elvis's hometown of Tupelo—lies 30 miles to the east. Most maps can't find it.

To raise a family of four, Leo says, "I run the chains, cut timber. I told my wife that if I had a dollar for every tree I trimmed off, I'd be a millionaire today. Called myself a one-man band, the one-man saw, cut timber for 35 years, goin' down there Monday to Friday. We couldn't see when we'd go, and we couldn't see when we'd come back, worked from dark to dark."

He couldn't afford to get to an audition in Memphis for B.B. King, so he didn't stray far from home or play late-night bars. And too tired from work, he took to playing in church. Saturday night music on Sunday. "They got me started playing for devotional services and the choir," he remembers. "When the preacher visited another place, me, my sister, and my sister-in-law—I called them the Sabougla Voices—would go along. Back in them days they didn't hardly allow guitar in church. It was the devil's work; carry a guitar in there, and they say you're sinnin.' But it changed," Welch reports. "I believe in the Lord and the blues has a ring just like gospel; but they don't have a book like the Bible. It's just different words. Blues is just explaining about life. Life on this earth."

Harmonico, who has known Leo all his life, also knew that blues musicians like Junior Kimbrough were having late-in-life success with Fat Possum Records. He hired Welch for his 50th birthday party, and surreptitiously recorded a few bars on his iPhone. Within a month, 10 tracks of Welch-as-real-gets, foot-stomping, hill-country gospel, *Leo Welch Sabougla*, was recorded on the subsidiary Fine Legal Mess, featuring all-star local musicians.

He caught the ear of NPR and other media, and Leo has worked on a film in New Orleans with Ryan Gosling, obtained a passport, and flown on an airplane for the first time, to blues clubs and festivals in Europe. He'll be back. And as bookings pour in, he's back in the studio.

The next one's gonna be blues. That's how I started off," says Welch. "I just play like I play. I'm not trying to be anybody else. I give all the credit to Big Money. He's my back bone. And I'm enjoying the best I ever enjoyed in my life."

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Lemon Bucket Orkestra

Tubthumping

The massed ranks of the LBO break the mould as they engage audiences with their madcap Gypsy music.

— By Tony Montague

The 16-member Lemon Bucket Orkestra swept all before it at this summer's folk festivals in Vancouver and Mission, like a party of musical barbarians marauding their way through Eastern European traditions from Romania to Macedonia, Transylvania to Ukraine, with side trips to New Orleans and the Middle East. The swagger and drive of the LBO, and its broad instrumental palette—fiddles, flute, trumpets, trombones, tenor sax, sousaphone, bass drum with cymbal, accordion, and guitar—left audiences gob-smacked.

Take, for instance, Sunday at Mission. It began with members of the Toronto-based LBO and fellow Hogtowners the Quartetto Gelato performing madcap Roma (Gypsy) music from the Balkans and elsewhere, with Russian-born Vancouverite Boris Sichon adding to the carnival-esque wildness. Not long afterwards, at another stage, five members of the LBO gathered to sing sea shanties as well as songs

such as Stan Rogers's *Northwest Passage*, with the "mighty Fraser" itself and the snow cone of Mt. Baker as a backdrop.

Onward to the early evening show on the main stage, which was preceded by a long parade of the LBO that wound its way all over the site, pausing every now and then for "energy-gathering" circles of playing. Once onstage the musicians delivered to the max in terms of pace, speed, and dramatic effect, and at the end—as in every set by the LBO—they abandoned the public pedestal abruptly, leaving in the same way as they arrived, as a ragged line of swirling brass, thumping percussion, and wailing fiddle weaving through crowd, chairs, and blankets. And at the final-night party sessions in the kitchen compound, lemon-flavoured madness continued into the wee hours.

Not unexpectedly, the origins of the many-headed LBO monster and its artists are in busking and partying. "Four of us were part of another group called the Worldly Savages, a Gypsy-punk group, and we made a name for ourselves locally at Kensington Market and other places in Toronto," says Mark Marczyk, LBO frontman and one of the three-pronged fiddle attack, with James McKie and Emelyn Stam.

"When we went on tour to Eastern Europe, four members started to get more interested in the traditional music. We all had some background in that. I'd spent a few years in Ukraine playing Balkan, Gypsy, klezmer, and Ukrainian music and touring there, for instance, and Tangi

[Ropars] grew up in Brittany, playing accordion. We started playing at after-parties for the Worldly Savages' shows, and soon it began to outgrow the event. People would come to hang out with the musicians and play these tunes, songs from back home, and we started to go out on the street and pick up other musicians. That was around five or six years ago."

'Lemon' in the Ukrainian port of Odessa is slang for money, so the LBO's name relates to the way in which the troupe scraped together an existence as street musicians. In 2010 they decided to make a go of it as a band, and it has been elastically expanding since then. Snap straight to a caper on an Air Canada flight that catapulted the LBO onto the world stage.

"I'd got a call three weeks earlier from a friend who runs the International Romani Festival in Romania saying he wanted a band to travel around the country promoting the festival," Marczyk recalls. "We would get to play with Taraf de Haïdouks and be able to bring people through our playing and excitement. The music to be more interested in their culture. We were honoured."

But the band needed to pay its way to Romania. Everyone wanted to go, and the music raised \$15,000 by busking. "On the flight, there were delays. The first time we just sat in our seats and grumbled like everyone does. But when the second delay hit, Tangi decided 'That's enough, I want to play accordion'," he just started doing that. Soon we all joined in and people were clapping and taking pictures.



When we got to Romania we went out busking and the Western media picked it up—CNN, *Huffington Post*, CBC, *New York Times*... It was amazing.”

Since then the bucket has been filling nicely. In the fall of 2012 the LBO released its debut album *Lume, Lume* and has now made three trips to Eastern Europe. This summer saw a Canadian tour that took them from coast to coast. And there are offshoot bands, including the instrument-free shanty singers Pressgang Mutiny—started by McKie, Marczyk, and four others while the LBO was on last year’s European tour.

The LBO is breaking some of the old moulds for the presentation of traditional music—which is not always something that reveals its essence on a platform in front of seated or supine consumers of some manufactured, albeit handmade, product tagged ‘folk’. The Lemons bring artist and public into a close, sweaty, and often ecstatic embrace. One of the things that’s really important to us is to make folk music—whether the tradition is in Eastern Europe or Southeast Asia, wherever—something that we value and try to bring out and get people actively engaged with,” says Marczyk. “I’ve spoken to many artistic directors now and this year in particular a lot of people have approached us—I don’t know if it’s the LBO or because the tide is shifting—they’re trying to think of different ways of bringing folk festivals back to people, so they’re not watching a performance on a stage, so it’s something that comes from people and communities around us that we want to know more about.

It’s important to us to build that community and culture of music. There’s a lot of talk, especially in Toronto, about the different music scenes—which scene are you a part of? Where do you fit in? Who comes to your shows? Often when I get those kind of questions I say that we’re not part of any scene—what we’re aiming to do is to get people to live the culture of live music, and to understand that while it’s been deteriorating gradually since the dawn of the digital era, it is—and was, and should be—a part of our everyday life.”

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STONY PLAIN

Tubthumping

Channelling the great *Électrique* guitar sounds of Africa into the traditional music of Quebec and Nova Scotia.

By Jason Schneider

Bette & Wallet

With their songwriting topics ranging from squeegee kids to aliens, Bette & Wallet are definitely a folk duo for our modern age. While Mary Beth Carty and Gabriel Ouellette lean heavily on the jigs and reels that have been heard in rural Nova Scotia and Quebec for centuries, their ability to combine them with a contemporary lyrical sensibility has made the pair one of the most unique acts travelling the North American and European folk circuit today.

Bette & Wallet's latest album, *Électrique*, pushes their sound even farther, with Ouellette displaying some impressive electric guitar chops throughout the record, complementing Carty's deep knowledge of traditional Irish, Cajun, and Klezmer styles. The pair has been perfecting this delicious musical gumbo since their first encounter at an Irish pub in 2005. They released their debut album, *Voici...*, in 2008—a true do-it-yourself effort including the cover art—which earned ECMA and Canadian Folk Music Award nominations. Over the course of the ensuing years, they appeared at many major folk festivals in Canada and Europe, while at the same time winning over young fans in clubs with their unorthodox approach.

Ouellette says that challenging the established perception of folk music has been the duo's guiding principle from the beginning, and it was put to the test throughout the four-year process it took to make *Électrique*. "We decided on a theme for the album at the start," he explained on the phone from his home in Portneuf, QC. "We wanted to touch on politics

and criticism, as well as go farther into urban legends. We were meeting all of these people when we were touring—weirdos you might say—and having all of these amazing conversations after the shows. That provided a lot of inspiration on this record."

Coming up with songs and concepts wasn't the problem for the pair. Instead, trying to take care of the other responsibilities of being full-time musicians almost completely derailed them in 2010 after the initial success of their first album. Ouellette reflects that getting away from the increasing pressure placed upon them helped tremendously in exploring new ideas.

"We'd put this project on ice for a while as we needed time for ourselves," he says. "We were both living in Nova Scotia, and I decided to move back to Quebec and stopped playing music altogether for a time. Mary Beth started her solo project [Mary Beth de Scène], and it took me a couple of months to even start jamming again with people. But from time to time I would go back on my computer and listen to what we'd done with *Électrique* to that point and we eventually knew that it was too good to just forget about."

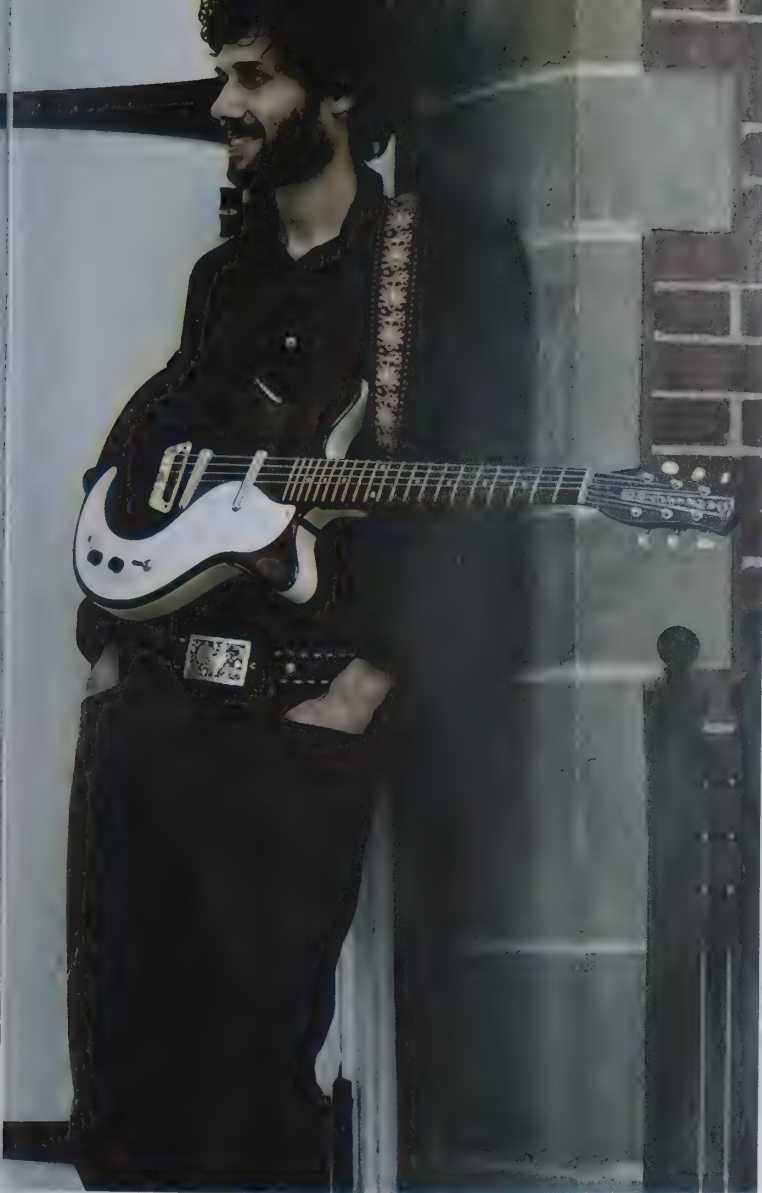
As mentioned, it is probably Ouellette's gui-

tar playing that is most striking about the new album. Although he grew up playing in rock bands, he had become a staunch traditionalist by the time Bette & Wallet came into being. But picking up an electric guitar again helped re-ignite his passion to play, and much of what he does on *Électrique* seems to channel the great African guitarists such as Ali Farka Toure. Surprisingly though, he admits he didn't intend to take that approach.

"We always had African electric guitar playing on the radio in Nova Scotia but I never realized how much of an influence it was having on me until some people started mentioning it," he says. "What I thought I was trying to do was play electric guitar like Celtic banjo, I suppose similar to Richard Thompson's style. But it was very hard, and I really put a lot of work into respecting the traditional melodies and putting real emotion into them. Sometimes I think traditional music is played way too safe and all of the emotion is drained from it when that happens. So, I believe all of this work has made me a much better player, and now when I play banjo, it seems so easy."

Ouellette adds that both he and Carty maintain their connections to traditional folk music





gely as a result of where each of them were born; both Carty's birth-
 place in Antigonish, NS, and his home, Portneuf, were important places
 where Quebecois and Irish musicians freely exchanged ideas. Some of
 Ouellette's other great inspirations are folksong collectors such as Alan
 Lomax, and although he hasn't gone to similar lengths, he has made a
 concerted effort to absorb the intricacies of the music from his native
 region.

"I became interested in folk art when I was at university and that led
 me to the music," he says. "In one class I did a study of the images on
 old songbooks, which mostly showed the Quebecois archetypes of lum-
 berjacks and such. That led me to discover the real masters of Quebecois
 music, and still now after years of listening to some of these record-
 ings, it's incredible how complex and deep that music was. That's why I
 have such respect for this music."

At the same time, both Ouellette and Carty know it's supposed to be
 simple as well, and probably the strangest song on *Électrique* to come out of
 their post-show encounters with fans is *Aliens Are Nice*. There is no other
 way to describe it than to have Ouellette do it himself but it is essentially
 one of the best examples of Bette & Waller's philosophy that folk music
 can be about anything you want it to be.

That song came after meeting this guy in Quebec City who seemed
 like a prophet, and based on hearing us play, he thought we would relate
 to everything he was into. We actually went to his place and he showed
 us these pyramids he was building out of glass, and other things to use to
 contact aliens and capture cosmic rays. He was an incredible person, and
 he talked all night. When you have an experience like that, you just have
 to write a song about it afterward."

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Tubthumping

After an absence of almost 20 years, the trail-blazing cult trio return with an acclaimed new recording.

By Yves Bernard

Le bruit court dans la ville

Almost two decades ago, the album *Le bruit court dans la ville* by André Marchand, Lisa Ornstein, and Normand Miron made a huge impact on the history of Quebecois trad. It was a splendid offering of simple and stripped-down music interpreted with virtuosity and loads of sensitivity in its swing. The album also told a story that took the listener from the Lanaudière region to Acadia and from Quebec to Lowell, MA. Today, *Le Bruit qui court dans la ville* is also the name of this trio, which has become a cult group on the trad scene, making appearances when they feel like it, only to disappear again. They made a strong comeback last year and at the beginning of the summer released *Les vents qui ventent*, the perfect follow-up to their first legendary album.

The trio's name comes from the song *Dans les prisons de Nantes*. "It's always hard to find a name," Normand Miron tells us. "We didn't get out to play much and we said that when we did, people would start saying that there was a buzz around town (in French: *le bruit court dans la ville*). It gave a certain secretive quality to what we were doing." The album came out in 1996-97, but the group didn't perform often.

At one point, Lisa moved to the west coast of the U.S. to raise her children. During this time, Normand and André continued to play together. They put out an album with Les Frères Labris and continued working with the renowned a cappella group Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer.

Why the comeback last year? "We all have families but now that our kids are grown up,

we're more available," Normand answers. "André and Lisa wanted to make an album. We've been on the scene for a while, and we all had little hidden treasures. We put them together and made *Les vents qui ventent*."

With its call-and-response songs, it is classic and melodious folk with Acadian and Quebecois, or more specifically Lanaudois, roots.

Les vents qui ventent is in the same spirit as the first disc but there is a greater richness in the group's interpretations. There are textured reels, harmonized turlottes, a polka preceded by a 6/8, a few Irish tunes, as well as songs about husbands who have been cheated on and lovers with supernatural powers. There's a more humorous number about members of parliament and another one that's about exile. With its call-and-response songs, it is classic and melodious folk with Acadian and Quebecois, or more specifically Lanaudois, roots.

Normand summarizes what the trio represents for him: "I love this group a lot for many reasons. André is an old friend. The definition of a friend is someone who we know well but who

we love anyway. That's André. We both love to sit at and hear music in the same way. Lisa brings something refreshing to the table. It's her American side and her way of looking at traditional music from a different angle."

Lisa Ornstein has great dexterity in her work and ornaments. She slides through melodies, laments with the best of them, attacks repetitive phrases, and sounds old-timey. Normand praises her qualities: "She's a great musician in many ways, harmonically as well as rhythmically. She can tune her violin in four or five different ways. She's traditional but original. I haven't heard many people with the same sound." She brings melodies, counter-melodies and arrangements to the songs suggested by her two colleagues.

Normand really enjoys using the minor key for many of the group's songs, which tend to have a sad and melancholy feel and slightly less feverish rhythms. "There aren't any pieces from my family on the new album. We picked up tunes here and there, in books and in the archives. I sometimes found the lyrics interesting but not the music, so I recomposed them. In other cases, I didn't like the lyrics so I would just keep the refrain and re-arrange the rest."



my liking. I'm not a purist. I'm like Jean-Paul Guimon: I re-arrange things when they don't suit me. André is more faithful to the things he finds in the archives."

André Marchand sings with a deeper voice, and his guitar work has earned him a solid reputation. When I interviewed Lisa last year, she explained why: "He has developed a recognizable style. I'd say it's in his choice of chords and the way he makes the strings vibrate. It also has to do with how he drives the music rhythmically. He has a fine-tuned ear and doesn't weigh the melody down or play over top of the vocals." In another interview, Normand backed this up: "I find he's brilliant in that his accompaniment is always perfectly complimentary."

Normand was educated by the Gravel side of his family, who were a key in inspiring La Bottine souriante in their beginnings. "He's a natural. He enjoys playing and is good at communicating his ideas. He's so spontaneous. It's like having an old friend who you can always continue the conversation with. I always discover new things when I play with him," explains Lisa.

Le Bruit court dans la ville were forerunners to groups such as Genforum, le Vent du nord, and many others that are currently finding success. Why is that? Here's Normand's explanation: "Our generation had Le Rêve du Diable and La Bottine. They took songs, found music that they liked, and put them together. It was new. Before that, people would sing songs and then play a piece of music. When we arrived on the scene, people realized that you didn't need 14 people in a group for it to work. I think it might have influenced trios and smaller groups to come together."



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Tubthumping

Rousing Inuit-country-meets-folky-funky-bad-ass-rock 'n' roll. Spread the aakuluk.

By Maghan Campbell



The Jerry Cans

It's eight in the morning, and completely quiet but for the sweet sound of snores dancing from my husband's nose. I am comatose, and loving it. Everything is peaceful, as it should be at this ungodly hour. Peaceful, that is, until the nasal sonata is sharply interrupted by a ringtone most shrill.

"Hello?" I am confused. My loved ones know not to call me at this hour if they want me to love them back.

The voice on the other end is perky. It introduces itself as Andrew Morrisson of The Jerry Cans—and quickly cuts itself short. My grogginess has betrayed me.

"Wait, what time is it there? Did I ... wake you up?"

I don't lie, but I'm trying to be nice.

"Maybe a little? But it's time for me to get up anyway so don't worry about it," I'm scrambling. Did I set this up? Did I choose the witching hour as the appropriate time for an interview? Not possible.

It is quickly ascertained that Morrisson is sitting in a hotel room in Charlottetown, P.E.I., with his wife, Nancy Mike (2013's Folk Awards Aboriginal Songwriter of the Year). The Iqaluit-based couple are about to meet their bandmates, and go represent Nunavut at the sesquicentennial (that mouthful means 150 years) anniversary celebrations of the Charlottetown Conference, which paved the way for Canada to become a country. Who knew? In any case, Andrew and The Jerry Cans have travelled a couple of thousand kilometres away from the midnight sun in the past few days to get to where they are, not to mention the time

zones. A mix up is only natural. I forgive.

A few hours later my brain has reactivated, and I'm chatting away with Morrisson, who hilariously cannot stop apologizing for earlier. This is a young man with quite a story to tell. He starts by explaining that Iqaluit is 20 minutes south of the Arctic Circle, making the little territorial capital more exotic and difficult to reach than, well, actually, most places on planet Earth.

"It can be exhausting," admits Morrisson, "when you have to fly for eight hours just to get to your next show." In spite of the major geographical challenges, the fivesome has still managed to travel a mind-blowing number of kilometres in the name of music, having become favourites in small towns and big festivals all across the North. They've even made a tour stop in Nuuk, Greenland ... which really is kind of amazing.

The band has also dipped its toes in the warm Southern Canadian waters, this year having the honour of being the first band from Nunavut ever to play at Toronto's NXNE festival.

Sometimes, heading South is more a necessity. When it came time to record their 2014 sophomore album, *Aakuluk*, The Jerry Cans faced a wee problem.

"Unfortunately," laughs Morrisson, "there are no official recording studios in Nunavut." That is, in the entire territory. And so the band hoofed it to Toronto, where they set up with producer Tim Vesely (formerly of The Rheostatics) at the Woodshed, a recording studio

owned and operated by Blue Rodeo.

While Morrisson and Mike's baby girl, Viivi, had cuddle time with Jim Cuddie, the band was busy pounding out *Aakuluk*, which the band has dubbed "2014's most unusual recording". The Jerry Cans, featuring Morrisson (vocals), Nancy Mike (throat singing, accordion, vocals), Gina Burgess (violin, vocals), Brendan Doherty (bass), and Stephen Rigby (drums) are indeed an unusual blend of rousing Inuit-country-swing-meets-folky-funky-bad-ass-rock'n'roll. The songs are mostly in Inuktitut, and just a little in English. Most special of all, though, are the tunes that feature Mike's deliciously rhythmic Inuit throat singing—something that maybe shouldn't be alongside The Jerry Cans' feverish genre mix, but really, really does.

Anyone who has seen them live knows that their joy onstage is infectious enough to melt children, hipsters, and salty old prospector alike to the dance floor—quite a feat. There's more to be found on *Aakuluk*, however, than just a call to dance. According to Morrisson, *aakuluk* is an Inuktitut term of endearment, is often used to express love to one another, a fitting thing, because the band itself was out of love.

Nancy and Andrew started dating in high school. It was a great thing for The Jerry Cans—her arrival in the band saw them move from jamming on covers in the frigid garage to exploring singing in Inuktitut, and writing joyful, thoughtful, often sharply political songs.



out their home territory. They've since become a powerful Northern
ce, as Morrisson writes: "The Jerry Cans exist to represent their cul-
e to their own communities, and to the rest of Canada. And, indeed,
world".

While Morrisson may have convinced Nancy to love him, however, he
his work cut out for him when it came to her family.

I always say that if you want to learn a language fast, get some inlaws
t don't speak English!" laughs Morrisson, when I ask him how he
rned Inuktitut. It's a work in progress—apparently when Morrisson
empted, in Inuktitut, to ask permission from Nancy's father to pro-
e to her, he instead asked if he could do her nail polish!

oolish though he felt at times, his efforts turned him towards a deep
pect for his new father-in-law, Livee Kallualik, the man to whom
kuluk is dedicated. Over hunting and fishing trips, and meals of
nak (fermented walrus meat, Livee's favourite), Livee told Morris-
his stories. In the beautiful title song, *Aakuluk Pt. 1*—one of the
sung entirely in English on the album—Morrisson sings of Livee:
amn government fools tried to rein him in / tell him where to hunt /
him to go to school / They taught him that he sinned / He lead a rev-
tion every day by speaking his tongue / refusing school and feeding
family".

When Mike and Morrisson were expecting their first daughter, Viivi,
ree had something to say.

[Livee] made me promise that we would raise Viivi in her culture,
aking her language," explains Morrisson. Sadly, Livee Kallualik
ssed away from cancer later that year, shortly after Viivi was born.
ke and Morrisson are fulfilling that promise, though. *Aakuluk* is a
autiful example.

Everytime while I try to speak / my sentences ain't right and my
ummar's kind of weak," sings Morrisson on *Quanuinnigittuq* (I Don't
nd). "And everytime that I look into her eyes / I know it in my heart
t I have to keep on trying."

may have razed Morrisson a little bit for calling me at 8 a.m. but
thfully, it's a story worth waking up for early on a Thursday morning.

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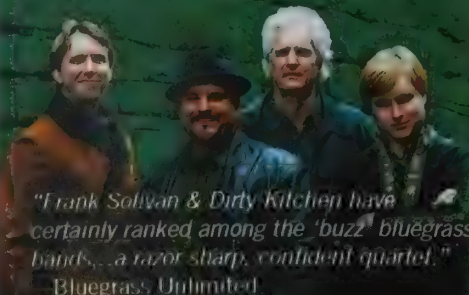
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Tubthumping

The acoustic blues maverick revisits a career that spans 50 years and 15 albums.

— By J. Poel

Chris Smither

The first day Chris Smither picked up a guitar, his course was set. “Once I started playing, I couldn’t stop,” Smither says. “My Uncle Howard taught musicology at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. He said if I learned four basic chords, I could pretty much play everything. My parents had a lot of folk music albums from the ’30s and ’40s. Burl Ives and Josh White, and I’d always liked to sing. Then I heard Lightnin’ Hopkins. That was it. He was making all the sounds of a rock’n’roll band and he was only one guy. I decided I was going to play the blues.”

Before he got obsessed with the guitar, Smither was studying to be an anthropologist. “I thought I’d spend one summer vacation playing coffee houses and see if I could support myself as a musician. This was in 1964, the middle of the Vietnam War. I thought I’d be drafted if I didn’t stay in school or move to Canada but the lure of playing music was too much to resist. I never did graduate. When the draft board called me up, I managed to convince them I wasn’t quite sane. One consideration was the fact that I was making my living as a travelling musician.”

Smither has been on the road ever since. This year, he’s celebrating his 50 years of music making with *Still on the Levee*, a two-CD set that revisits some of the songs he’s recorded on the 15 albums that make up his catalogue. It was recorded in his hometown of New Orleans and features guest appearances by the folk rock



band Rusty Belle, Loudon Wainwright III and legendary pianist Allen Toussaint. “[Toussaint] was a hero of mine when I was a teenager,” Smither says. “To have him in the studio working for me was an incredible and intimidating experience. He asked if he could play on *No Love Today*, which was an amazing boost to my ego. He doesn’t like to do much but play piano, so when everyone else was going out to get coffee, he just sat at the piano noodling. He was dressed to the nines, a real pro. We were all in T-shirts and jeans. He had an elegant suit on his back that would have cost more than a week’s salary for the average person.”

Still on the Levee shows the impressive range

of styles that Smither brings to his music. He is nominally a blues guitarist but his eclectic sound isn’t defined by anyone’s ideas about what a blues musician ought to be. Still, he wasn’t sure that a compilation was the way to mark his 50 years on the road. “It’s amazing what happens if you just keep waking up one day after another,” Smither says, chuckling. “I knew I wanted to mark the time in some way but it was my producer, David Goodrich, who convinced me that this album was important. That’s why we decided to record it in New Orleans, the place it came from and, in some ways, never left.”

Smither and Goodrich spent three weeks in New Orleans. They recorded the basic tracks

songs, then had people come in to add their overdubs. "Some of the songs would bring back the feelings I had when I wrote them. You keep your performance fresh by putting yourself back in the place where you were when you composed [a song] but feelings change with the perspective you gain as you age.

"We re-recorded the songs with the idea of taking a look at my body of work from the perspective of today. Revisiting them, I could see how sturdy they were. At 70, listening to songs I wrote when I was 19 or 20 is an odd experience. I'd listen to some and think, 'What is this guy saying?' Some I had to relearn and tried to bring something new to them, to inform them with my present reality. In the years since I started, I've learned so much about playing and recording and the craft of songwriting. I wanted to reflect the growth I've experienced over all these years." The set list includes obvious Smither favourites such as *Love You Like a Man*, a hit for Bonnie Raitt, who sang it as *Love Me Like a Man*; *Slow Surprise*, which Emmylou Harris recorded for *The Horse Whisperer* soundtrack; *Up on the Lowdown*, and more recent songs such as *What They Say*, played as a duet with Loudon Wainwright III.

"I was looking to inform the collection with different aspects of my songwriting. *What They Say* shows off the wry humour I tend to employ and it's a fun recording. Loudon has that wry humour thing down, too. It is worth putting on the album just to show how someone other than me relates to one of my songs.

"Goody [producer Goodrich] is great at helping me expand my sound, without stepping on what I'm doing. I depended on him to fill out the production. When we recorded *Winsome Smile* with [folk rock band] Rusty Belle, we did two takes, one a real rough rock'n'roll version. Nobody asked me if I could sing it in A. It's the most high-powered rock singing I've ever done. It was a surprise to me that I could do it. When finished, Goodie said, 'I don't know who you were channelling on that one but keep it up. You should have been doing this for the last 30 years'."

Although it was fun playing with Rusty Belle, Smither said he's never been tempted to go on the road with a band. "I've had people tell me that they'd make me a star if I put a band together but I didn't want to do it. The kind of money you get doing the gigs you have to do to get popular would never be enough to support a band. But for a solo performer, it's more than adequate."



Chris Smither



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Tubthumping

The Toronto club that hosts some of Canada's most improbable folk, roots and acoustic music.

— By Glen Herbert

TRANZAC Club

If you've never lived in Toronto, it's safe to say that you've never heard of the Tranzac Club. Then again, that's safe to say even if you have lived in Toronto. It began life in 1931 as the Toronto Australia New Zealand Club (TRANZAC) to support Australian and New Zealand culture in Toronto. It did that, and a lot more, too. In the 1970s it became home to Friends of Fiddlers Green, a folk music club, and soon became a venue for seemingly anyone who needed a place to play. Today it's as much a fixture of the city as the pigeons roosting on the head of King Edward VII in Queen's Park.

And still, it makes no sense at all. It's hard to describe the building, screened by trees just off Queen Street West. The entry is papered with photocopies shilling fringe theatre and Reg Hartt film festivals. The tables don't match, and the bar is real wood only because, when it was made, they all were. The rooms are set about like a warren—the Tiki Room, the Main Hall, the Southern Cross Lounge—with the larger one in the back for bigger things, like fringe theatre, and the Zine Library, and the Chris Langan Branch of the Ceoltóirí Éireann Traditional Music Weekend.

It's dark, the floor creaks, and there's no cover and no food that I recall beyond the bags of chips hanging on a rack behind the bar. And yet, I'm not sure if you could find a place in Canada that has had as large an impact in the world of roots, folk, and acoustic music. We often make statements like that but I honestly don't feel I'm knitting anything here. Quietly,

and for decades, the Tranzac has provided a focal point for a range of musicians that are as improbable as they are delightful.

I was living in Toronto in the early '00s and then, as now, they had music every night of the week. Lit only by a few incandescent bulbs, Wednesday night was Gypsy jazz night, typically with four or five guys playing *petit bouche* guitars, expertly, and singing in French or Roma or whatever it was. It was mind-boggling. I had no idea where you could get a *petit bouche*, let alone find someone to play one with. But there they were.

Thursday, as now, was bluegrass night. Some nights, snow flying outside the window behind

the band, I'd be the only one there aside from the bartender and the band. I didn't know of any of the players, not then, but I do now. Chances are good that you do as well. Doug Paisley sang and played guitar, Andrew Collins played mandolin, and Marc Roy played guitar and fiddle and mandolin. At the time, none of them had made any recordings, though all of them have now. Roy has been named the Central Canadian Bluegrass Guitar Player of the Year five times, mandolin player of the year once, and two years ago was inducted into their hall of fame. Collins was named mandolin player of the year five times, and went on to form the Creeking Tree String Quartet

Photo by: David Woodhead





day, Doug Paisley is known for his songwriting, such as on his newest release, *Strong Feelings*, which is out this year. He's been reviewed by *Rolling Stone* and *The New Yorker*, where Sasha Frere-Jones called him "a quiet wonder".

At the Tranzac, though, it was different.

"It was just exciting," says Andrew Collins. "It was fun and exciting without any forethought on how to make any of it work. It was just focused on the playing, and improving the level of music, and being surrounded by people that shared that drive. ... It was all just friends who had a mutual interest."

One night Paisley noted over the mic that Roy had turned 19 that week and was now legally allowed into bars. That he was so young was the best of it. Roy was astonishing in every way: beautiful rhythm, blistering runs, and an otherworldly confidence. I approached him on a few occasions, though it seemed that he didn't really speak. He'd mumble

something, look at the floor or to the left, as if expecting something.

As impressed as I was, I didn't realize how good they really were. In Canada, bluegrass has all the gravity of a secret handshake; it's just not a musical language that we understand, nor is it one that we typically have much access to.

"In retrospect," says Collins, "the nice thing was that there was no void waiting for us to fill. You have to go out there and make people know that you exist and perform and get your music out there some how. Even though we were in a vacuum of this kind of music, that was in some ways an advantage because we were also educating people [who might] discover that they really like bluegrass music but we were the access point so in some ways it elevates us in stature because, for those people, we were their starting point."

I, frankly, was one of them. Over time I began to recognize some of the other people who came in to watch from time to time, and so many of them were musicians themselves. Chris Coole, Chris Quinn, John Showman, Dan Whitely, Max Heinemann—after sets at the raucous Silver Dollar, where bluegrass was accepted as a novelty more than as something to be honestly appreciated, they came to the Tranzac, perhaps sitting in, perhaps not. It was quieter, and if the audience was smaller, it nevertheless was less oiled and more knowledgeable. It was perhaps the one place in town where bluegrass, consistently, was not a joke.

At the heart of it, these were young people making music—they weren't trying to advance a career, or sell tickets and recordings, and the stress that comes from music as a life, rather than an activity, hadn't yet set in. "There is a lot of work required to make a living doing what you love," admits Collins, something he would learn all too well in time. It was different. There weren't the fireworks of Collins's Creaking Tree Quartet, or the need to be unique within a crowded singer/songwriter market. It wasn't Appalachia, or a job. It wasn't a festival, or a contest, or a project. It was just music. And, tucked away in Toronto, they were free.

Andrew Collins is a member of the Foggy Hogtown Boys and the founder of the Creaking Tree Quartet and the Andrew Collins Trio. His latest recording is the Andrew Collins Trio's A Play on Words.



Andrew Collins

Tubthumping

They lean to the raw, nastier side of Cajun traditions – the sound called *croche* (crooked).

By Roger Levesque



The Lost Bayou Ramblers

Credit Louie Michot for fiddling his heart out as Louisiana sinks.

Over an interview with the singer/musician and a later concert from his band Lost Bayou Ramblers at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, this ambassador for Cajun music twice noted that Louisiana is the fastest-sinking land mass on the planet.

While the rich culture of the southern state won't be gone tomorrow, you have to figure that such an unsettling forecast from credible scientists adds an underlying urgency to the Lost Bayou Ramblers' unofficial mission to re-invent Cajun music for a new generation.

"It's just about the energy," explains Michot. "I can never get enough driving rhythm and that's how people are connecting to the music. People are telling us, 'I've been waiting for someone to do this for a long time'."

Michot is deservedly proud of the attention the band has drawn to Cajun music even as they take things a step beyond what the genre usually involves.

"Now we're not just a Cajun band anymore, a band that plays waltzes and two-steps. We never quite fit that mould anyway. And Cajun music is an American music, between Texas and Mississippi, where delta blues, New Orleans jazz and country swing all meet. We Cajun-ify everything, so where's the purity? There are as many dialects of Cajun French as there are ways to play the same song."

Whether its on their celebrated 2012 album *Mammoth Waltz* or onstage in a rousing concert, you can hear the urgency in the crazed and forlorn tone of Louie Michot's French

vocals and fiddle, in his brother Andre Michot's unstoppable accordion rhythms and moody lap steel, in Cavan Carruth's corrosive electric guitar (all three use effects pedals). Then add the pummelling drums to set it rocking (Paul (Deathwish) Etheridge left after the album, replaced by drummer Eric Heigle).

The band is getting out there. They immortalized their hit *Bastille* in the final season of HBO's mini-series *Treme*, and performed to an audience of 30,000 at the 2013 Montreal Jazz Festival. With their unshackled energy, Lost Bayou Ramblers are drawing new ears to the sinking state.

Growing up in and around Lafayette, Louie could trace back music makers on both sides of the Michot family for several generations. His father and uncles started Les Freres Michot in the early 1980s, playing a key role in his education-by-osmosis. He started fiddle at seven as his older brother, Andre, was taking up guitar, and both were gradually integrated.

At 18 he took a French language immersion sojourn in Nova Scotia (home of the Acadians before they were exiled in 1764, only to sew their new 'Cajun roots in Louisiana). As he was busking, picking up fiddle styles and learning to sing in French, Andre was back in Louisiana learning accordion. At the same time both brothers nursed a love for rock'n'roll, blues, and harder stuff like Led Zeppelin and Metallica, sounds they pursued in various high school bands.

"We were never that involved in Cajun festi-

vals, more in the rock'n'roll clubs. All I knew about Cajun music was that I liked it. I used to invite friends over to play the triangle, the rhythms of Cajun rhythms. So we had these psychedelically rock bands on one side and Cajun music on the other."

In 1999 they got a show on their own in a downtown Lafayette cafe. A friend suggested the name and Lost Bayou Ramblers were born. They released their debut *Pilette Breakdown* in 2001.

The original quartet mirrored the acoustic lineup of Les Freres Michot but drew inspiration more from the bluesy looseness of 1920s Cajun recording pioneers like Joe Falcon and Cleoma Breaux. The sound they call "croche" (crooked) was a contrast to the slicker Cajun dance bands.

"We were definitely on the nastier side. Our first couple of albums were raw, very homemade, and at the time there weren't really any young Cajun bands doing that. We were more underground."

They made inroads into New Orleans, California, and New York, playing their first overseas gig in Lyon, France, in 2004. The shows evolved beyond quick dance sets into hardcore performances with original individual songs. Their third album, *Live: A La Blanche Moon* (2007), got them a Grammy nomination. It was made the same weekend as their next studio album *Vermillionaire* (2008, the debut on their own Bayou Perdu label).

Another career highlight came about when



New Orleans filmmaker Benh Zeitlin asked them to participate in a soundtrack. Once the band laid down their tracks, organic orchestrations were added. No one guessed that his movie *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012) would be nominated for four Oscars and draw rave reviews. Since then the band has been called on to perform with orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic.

But the real breakthrough was yet to come on *Mammoth Waltz* (2012). We went for what we wanted to hear, doing different takes, marinating it. It was a long, weird process that took about a year, on and off, before it was finished and it was the most amazing thing that I've ever been part of. It set us apart from what we had been."

Leitch credits Lafayette's Dockside Studio producer Korey Richey for his essential input as they searched out new sounds, atmospheres, and grooves you just don't expect in a Cajun band. Richey also roped in guests such as New Orleans piano great Dr. John, and Hollywood star Carey Mulligan, whose album he had recently produced (she sings backup on two tracks).

Jordan Gano also lends his vocal and fiddle. They met the Violent Femmes frontman in 2008 when he unexpectedly jumped onstage in a New Orleans club to sing on the Ramblers' cover of the VF's anthemic *Star In The Sun* ("We didn't know who the hell he was until he told us we were in the wrong key"). They've been friends ever since for their shared influences and indie rock outlook.

Mammoth Waltz offers their most penetrating, socially aware lyrics ever on songs like *Bastille*, and the haunting *Maree Noire* (Black Tide)—which reference the disastrous gulf oil spill, which started while the album was in progress. A gorgeous cover of Daniel Lanois's *O Marie* is almost unrecognizable and several traditionals are also vividly reworked.

"We were recording this album during the Gulf oil spill and it was just so sad. Every morning you would wake up and it was still pouring out of the well, so it was inspiring in a very dark, tragic way. But between hurricane Katrina, the oil spill and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, it's brought so much attention to Louisiana. Maybe things will turn out better than you think."

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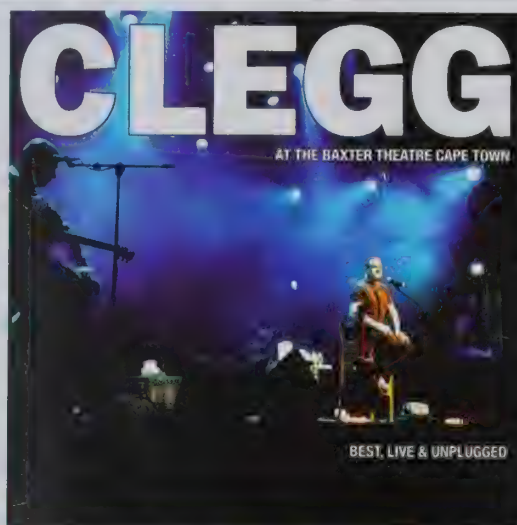
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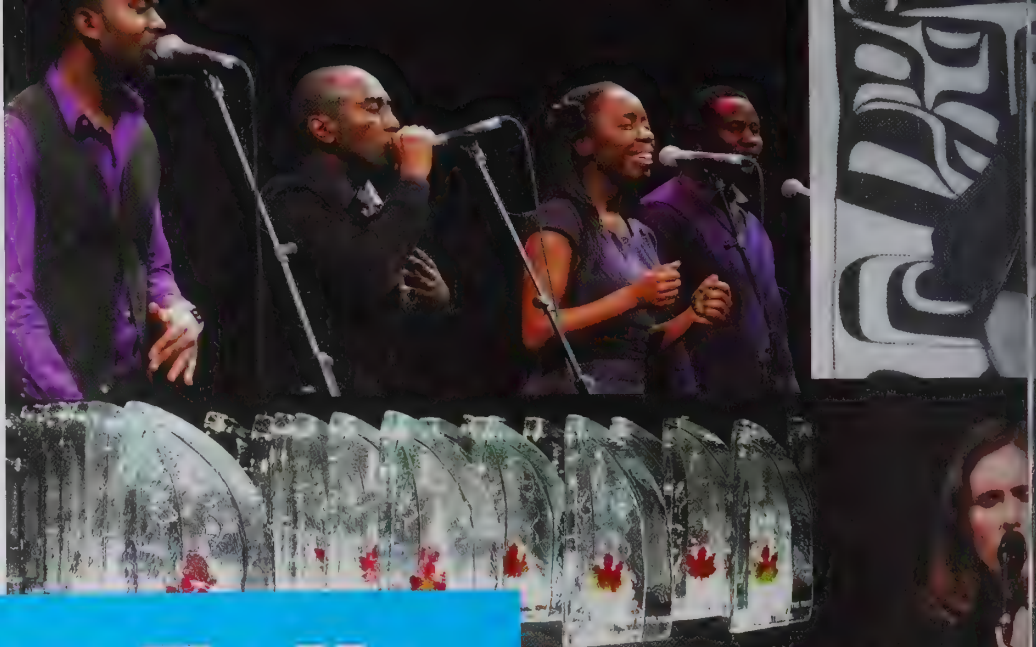
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Tubthumping

The CFMAs turn 10 this year. Our man takes a look back at its trials and eventual triumphs.

— By Pat Langston



Canadian Folk Music Awards

When the Canadian Folk Music Awards celebrates its tenth anniversary this November, it can toast itself for not only spotlighting current artists but also inspiring a new and sometimes surprisingly far-flung generation.

That's certainly the case according to the Jerry Cans, whose co-lyricist/throat singer Nancy Mike won Aboriginal songwriter of the year in 2013.

Says her band mate and partner Andrew Morrison in an email, "Nancy is a role model to many young Inuit in our territory and for her to win that award was not just a great moment for our band but for all young Inuit who have dreams of being artists. This is definitely the most important part of our winning the award."

Morrison mentions other benefits of the award including how festival directors and promoters suddenly began sitting up and taking notice of the band. But that boost to would-be artists is a singularly sweet side of the CFMAs and its mandate to celebrate and promote both contemporary and traditional Canadian folk and allied genres including world music.

Once an upstart on the music scene, the awards last year drew an astounding 570 nomination submissions across 20 categories. Those categories ranged from traditional and contemporary album of the year to instrumental solo artist, young performer, and producer.

The gala awards ceremonies also pull in an audience of roughly 500 while the overall event



includes nominee showcases and industry workshops. The awards travel to different cities but return to Ottawa this year Nov. 27-29 with the gala at the Bronson Centre on the 29th.

Winners, meanwhile, read like a *Who's Who* of established and emerging Canadian folk artists, among them Bruce Cockburn, the Good Lovelies, Le Vent du Nord, and Kierah. There's also an annual unsung hero award for exceptional contribution to Canadian folk music; last year's winner was whirlwind Mitch Podolak whose achievements include co-founding the Winnipeg and Vancouver folk festivals.

The first ceremony was held in 2005 but the idea stretches back a decade earlier, according



to founding member and veteran Canadian musician Grit Laskin.

That's when he circulated a letter to Canadian music movers and shakers suggesting a folk music awards. There was no response, although Laskin and fellow musician/Borealis Records partner Bill Garrett occasionally chewed over the idea. Then, says Laskin, one day he was chatting to *Penguin Eggs* editor Roddy Campbell, who'd also been talking up the concept, said, 'Roddy, let's just do it!'

Garrett jumped on board. Ditto Arthur McGregor of the Ottawa Folklore Centre and Newfoundland musician Jean Hewson. Campbell left in 2009 and Hewson left two years



Garrett and McGregor are moving on after this year, leaving only Judith Laskin from the original founding group. The first awards gala was held in the magnificent Great Hall of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (now the Canadian Museum of History) in Gatineau, QC, just across the river from Ottawa. Music honchos Les Garand and Connie Kaldor emceed. "It was absolute magic," recalls McGregor. "The place was packed. The people were dressed to the nines; others were in folk wear. The excitement was palpable." Interestingly, Garrett echoes others when he says that the competitive element of the awards—including the whittling down of five nominees in each category to a single winner in each by 100 jurors across Canada—is part a media-savvy move. "We started (the awards) primarily to raise the visibility of the music. The way to do this is through categories—the media loves a contest." Hewson, meanwhile, says the definition of folk music remains fraught.

She created the original categories and says discussions regularly swirl around whether a particular album fits the proposed category and that jurors sometimes question whether an album is even folk.

"We have to be careful to be as inclusive as possible," she says.

Campbell contrasts the CFMAs with the Junos, calling the latter a "national embarrassment" when it comes to folk music. The two roots and traditional categories this year included country, blues, and indie-pop artists, he says. "Money rules the Junos: it's all about (record) sales, not art. They have no credibility anymore, so people are looking at the CFMAs and saying, 'Yeah, they're properly juried; they have integrity. This is a good thing'."

It's not just the winners who benefit. Last year the Lemon Bucket Orchestra was nominated in four categories but won in none. Even so, says band member Mark Marczyk, the group suddenly started landing gigs that would likely have otherwise remained elusive. As well, "there's so many veteran musicians in our categories that to be put with them is a bit of a validation (for us)."

With the CFMAs chipping in big-time to support it, Canadian folk music has evolved a lot over the lifetime of the awards. Garrett sees singer/songwriters continuing to predominate over traditional artists at the same time that he notices young artists, many with no interest in pursuing music professionally, gathering at local watering holes for casual evenings of playing Celtic and other traditional styles.

Hewson, giving the CFMAs a pat on the back for their role, says Newfoundland artists have gained considerable traction on the mainland over the past 10 years.

Music publicist Heather Kitching, who has helped with the CFMA in years past, says the awards have similarly heightened the profile of Quebec musicians in English Canada.

With all this happening, are the CFMAs still needed?

More than ever, according to Kitching. Media attention is crucial in maintaining awareness of Canadian folk, and that attention is harder to grab all the time, she says. Awards shows, as Garrett points out, are media magnets.

As to the CFMAs' future direction, Laskin says he'd like to see even more focus on the nominees, perhaps through radio interviews and airing of nominees' music.

The organization has also recently hired Andy Frank, co-founder of the Canadian website Roots Music Canada (rootsmusic.ca), as project director. His endeavours include a documentary about the awards' first 10 years.

No matter what direction the awards take, the spotlight remains on the gala.

And if you've been to the gala, you may agree with Laskin about its highlight: the winners who thought they had no hope of triumph. "They say, 'Oh, look at everyone else who's nominated in my category—there's no way', and then they win and are half in shock and don't know what to say. That's what tickles me the best."

All photos above are courtesy of the Canadian Folk Music Awards and were taken by its volunteers: Thom Fountain, Graham Grant, Graham Lindsey, Paul Cunningham and Ian Jones. Top Row, L to R: Soul Influence (2011), James Keelaghan (2005), Mitch Podolak (2013). Middle Row: Shelagh Rogers and Benoit Bourque (2011), Rose Cousins (2011), Loreena McKennitt (2013), Tanya Tagaq (2005). Bottom Row: Lynn Miles (2005), Mike Ross and Matt Andersen (2012), Métis Fiddler Quartet (2012)

Tubthumping

A new musical language takes shape on the Welsh harp and the Senegalese kora.

By Tony Montague



Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita

During the interval at Catrin Finch and Seckou Keita's concert in London in May, the instruments remained onstage, supported on their stands and suffused in an eerie deep blue light—two harps, a West African kora, and an extraordinary, custom-designed, double-necked kora that resembled the head and horns of some huge antelope-like deity.

The instruments were proud and temporarily mute messengers from the ancient traditions they represented—the griots of West Africa's former Manding Empire, and the bards from the Atlantic fringe of northwest Europe—brought together and adapted with a combination of respect and playfulness.

Finch and Keita are not, of course, the first artists to explore common ground between these musically potent areas of the world. The Afro-Celts are the best known of these, and Malian kora master Toumani Diabaté also paved the way. But no previous project has been on such a sustained equal footing as the duo of Finch and Keita, who are shaping a new musical language.

"Toumani was there before, and indeed this collaboration with Seckou started out with him," Finch reveals. "In my experience of collaborations there are a lot of different components that need to be in place for success—it's not just the ability to pair the instruments it's about the musicians. What's worked for Seckou and me is that we both entered it with very open minds, and we've clicked together musically and very much enjoy each other's

company on the stage."

The duo earned universal praise with its debut *Clychau Dibon* (2013) not only for the brilliance of the music but also the exceptional quality of the package—a hardcover-style CD with great design, photos, and informative text. The opening track, *Genedigeath Koring-Bato*, sets the pattern of alternating the influences, starting quietly as a Celtic-classical piece and shifting seamlessly, almost unnoticeably, to a West African groove. It becomes difficult, and perhaps irrelevant, to work out who is playing what, and that of course is the point. Another challengingly titled piece, *Les Bras de Mer (Carabane – Bae Aberteifi)*, goes in the opposite direction, ending with the lovely carillon sound of Clychau Aberdyfi—the Bells of Aberdovey.

Finch and Keita constantly trade the instrumental lead, concentrating intensely on their partner's fingers and their face while playing. The music seems to arise between them like some third being. Occasionally they play in unison. Most pieces are mid-tempo or up-tempo, though not primarily for the feet but for the heart and soul. And the notes and chords come in swelling waves.

Only the finest musicians can twine traditions with such ease, subtlety, and grace. Finch is arguably the greatest young harpist in Wales. Though she was born and grew up in the principality, her parents are English and German—

proof that blood has nothing to do with the of an instrument or music, nor the ability to master styles.

"Here in Wales the harp is the national instrument," she says. "I was inspired by a Spanish harpist, Marisa Robles, who gave a concert in a nearby town when I was five and I decided right then that's what I wanted to do. There was a peripatetic teacher who went 'round the schools and that's how I started learning."

"The small harp I play is an electric-lever harp; as a young harpist you begin on one of those. I developed my harp playing in a very classical way. After the lever harps you progress to the small pedal harps, and as you grow so the harp grows with you. The blue harp I have is a typical concert grand that's electro-acoustic, with a pickup at the bottom of each string. So for gigs that are amplified it's a much greater sound—you can give it some nice welly in the bass, and control things more. The harp that I play normally, outside my concerts with Seckou, is acoustic."

Keita's musical pedigree is ancient. "I was born into an exceptional griot family on the side of my mother, Fatou Bintou Cissokho," he says, interviewed separately and speaking in French. "My grandfather was one of the most important griots in lower Casamance [multi-ethnic south of Senegal]. I learned the kora in the family, along with my uncles, and my mother's brothers. What's exceptional is the



Seckou would start playing something he'd grown up with [in Senegal] and I'd realize there was a Welsh song I knew that fit perfectly over those chords and that pattern." – Catrin Finch.

My father's family name is Keita, which goes back to Sundiata Keita, who was the Manding emperor. The Keitas are known as nobles, not musicians or griots—they receive music, they don't make it. "I started at the age of seven to learn to play the kora, and how to make my own instrument, and to learn traditional pieces along with the histories that go with them. I left off at the age of 18. Learning the kora, I was curious also to learn the djembe, the sabar, and other African percussions. My roots are Manding but my neighbours come from other cultures—Wolof, Peul, Jola. Anyway, I learned their rhythms and became the percussionist for my family." Keita worked these into the show with Finch, with some amazing tapping on the pegs and wood of his kora in one section of *Future Rings*—a piece that also featured Finch strumming percussively across her harp, using the familiar *rasqueado* technique of flamenco. Some of the discoveries they've made in bringing Celtic and African rhythms into dialogue have amazed Finch and Keita. "Seckou would start playing something he'd grown up with and I'd realize there was a Welsh song I knew that fit perfectly over those chords and that pattern. Although these songs and tunes developed from opposite ends of the world they still work and fit together, different cultures manage to merge. "We're still discovering things, mainly at sound checks!" Finch continues. "There were a couple of occasions on this last tour when we were just messing around, and all of a sudden something would click and we'd start jamming and all of a sudden you've got this really cool piece. And so we'd both grab our phones to record it before we forget, and put it in the bank for development. It's that process that makes it so rewarding."



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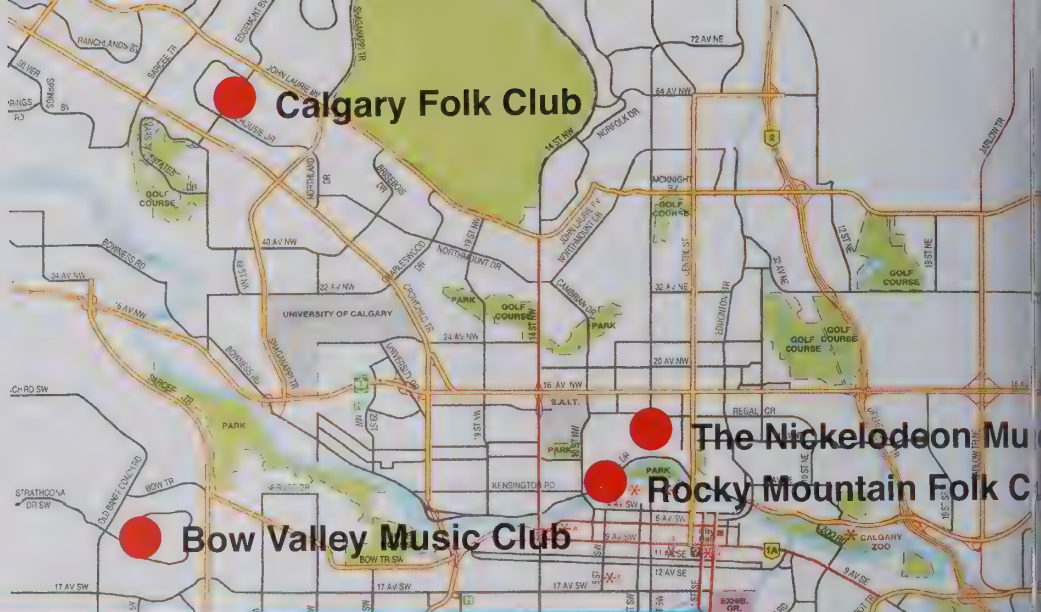
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Tubthumping

Calgary, Alberta, hosts more folk clubs than any other city in the country. Cue a vibrant and thriving scene.

By Lisa Wilton



Calgary: Folk Club Capital of Canada

When Mansel Davies and his band, The Wild Colonial Boys, started the Calgary Folk Club in 1972 there was little evidence it would last beyond a couple of shows.

After all, the city wasn't known as a folk music hot spot and the few clubs and live venues around were hangar-like in size, catering mostly to country and rock fans.

It became quickly apparent, however, that there was an audience for traditional British and American folk music in Calgary. And that audience was a dedicated one, coming out to every show no matter the headliner.

Its success didn't come as a surprise to Davies, who had emigrated from Wales with his wife, Anne, in 1967.

He'd seen first-hand the popularity of folk music clubs while playing in such bands as The Corries and the Ian Campbell Folk Group, the latter of which ran the U.K.'s premier folk venue, The Jug O' Punch, in Birmingham.

By recreating the ambience and structure of The Jug O' Punch, the Calgary Folk Club attracted British ex-pats and music fans wanting something more than what the bars at the time were offering.

"There was nobody doing what we were doing," recalls Davies from his home in Edmonton.

"It took off because of the right approach to the music ... and the social thing was equally important to the music. Music doesn't exist in a vacuum."

It didn't hurt that the Calgary Folk Club had



a built-in audience thanks to interested students from the adult ed. music classes taught by Davies and fellow Wild Colonial Boys Johnny Worrall and John Martland.

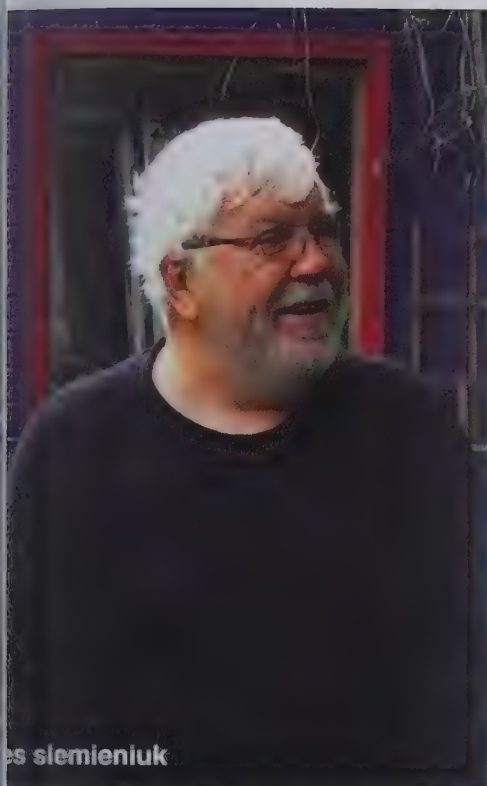
"He started these classes that were very popular," recalls Bow Valley Music Club artistic director Larry Taylor.

"There was a big push by people in these classes to see this kind of music. They were like, 'Where can we go listen to this?'"

Fast forward 40 years, and Calgary is now home to more than half a dozen folk music venues, as well as one of the best folk festivals in the country. So why does Calgary boast



The Wild Colonial Boys: Mansel Davies second from right



are successful folk music clubs than anywhere else in Canada?

To be honest, there's no clear answer. It's part luck, part timing, part hard work of volunteers, and part loyal following.

But the general consensus among the city's folk club artistic directors and general managers is that their success still emanates from that initial push by Davies and the Wild Colonial Boys creating the Calgary Folk Club.

"When Mansel came here, he knew how to start a folk club, and he did it," explains former Calgary Folk Music Festival GM Les Siemieniuk.

By the time the city grew up around it, the clubs were established. It was kind of an accident. If Mansel hadn't come and started the Calgary Folk Club, would someone else have? I don't know. I doubt it."

The fact that the city's folk clubs manage to attract healthy subscriber bases after 20, 30 or 40 years is also a testament to the countless hours put in by passionate staff and hundreds of volunteers.

The talent, energy and drive of these various groups laid a very good foundation for what we have today," says Vic Close of Fish Creek Concerts.

It's worth remembering that in the early days we were all young, reasonably well educated and lovers of particular types of music. The difference is that we also were able to motivate our friends, family and acquaintances to come along on the adventure with us. Some of us are still at it while others have jumped into the fray to keep these organizations alive and thriving."

Even Calgary's urban sprawl has played a part in keeping clubs such as the Rocky Mountain

Folk Club, Nickelodeon Music Club, and the Celtic Folk Club vibrant and viable, despite lack of advertising. Since the clubs are spread out across the city, they have become part of the unique fabric of Calgary's different communities.

"At least 25 per cent of our season ticket holders are right from Strathcona, says Taylor, who brought Saturday Night Special to the southwest neighbourhood's community hall in 1998.

"People in that community have certainly taken to it. Same thing with the Nickelodeon in Crescent Heights and the Calgary Folk Club in Dalhousie. The communities those clubs have been established in have certainly come to support them."

Susan Casey, the Calgary Folk Club's current artistic director, first volunteered with the organization in 1976. She believes collaboration between the clubs and the Calgary Folk Music Festival helped build what the scene is today.

"It's been very grassroots," she says. "There's been a commitment to collaboration and building a scene rather than staking out a territory."

It's not just Calgary's folk scene regulars blowing their own horns. When the Canadian Folk Music Awards were held in Calgary in 2013, bookers, publicists, label reps, and musicians were impressed with the exceptional public response to the gala and showcases.

"It captured the imagination of the folk music industry across Canada," says Casey.

Taylor adds, "When we go to places like Memphis and Kansas City for the Folk Alliance Conference, they all ask about Calgary. They ask, 'What is it with Calgary?'. I think it's just been chance to some extent and the fact that many of the same people have stayed in the scene for a long time. Also, other people have come along to pick up the ball and keep it going."

Whether that ball keeps rolling remains to be seen. Although roots music has no shortage of talented, young musicians and fans, folk club subscribers are aging and the shift to younger audiences has been slow.

There are also far more options for roots music fans in the city than ever before, with venues such as the Ironwood Stage, Festival Hall and Wine-Ohs booking similar artists.

"It's a bit of a scary time now because everybody's discovered roots music and now we're all competing," says Siemieniuk.

But he's also optimistic that if younger people are made to feel welcome and comfortable enough to volunteer, the city's folk clubs will continue to thrive.

"The folk clubs fill a certain niche," he says.

Join The Club

Bow Valley Music Club

www.bowvalleymusicclub.org

The BVMC's current season offers 10 concerts and includes, The Good Lovelies, Ridley Bent and Guy Davies. Its house band opens each show.

Calgary Folk Club

www.calgaryfolkclub.com

The granddaddy of the city's folk scene, the Calgary Folk Club is now in its 43rd season. It has featured such folk icons as Stan Rogers and Odetta. The new season includes Lynn Miles, Vishten and Dala.

Celtic Folk Club

www.celticfolkcalgary.org

As its name suggests, the Celtic Folk Club presents regular traditional Irish and Scottish music concerts, which feature its house band, The Rakes of Sunday.

Nickelodeon Music Club

www.thenick.ca

The Nick, as it's affectionately known, started in 1980 and has put its focus on booking slightly edgier acoustic acts. Its latest series offers the likes of Martin Simpson, Fred Eaglesmith, Old Man Luedecke and John Reischman.

Rocky Mountain Folk Club

www.rockyfolkclub.tripod.com

Calgary's second-longest running folk club started in 1975 as a more traditional British folk option to the Calgary Folk Club. It doesn't sell as many advance season tickets as other clubs, preferring to make room for more walk-up sales.

Saturday Night Special

www.saturdaynightspecial.ca

The Chinook Musical Society became a non-profit organization in 1976 and hosts upwards of 10 concerts a year. Its current season includes Ian Tyson, The Bills and David Francey.

Fish Creek Concerts

www.fishcreekconcerts.com

While held in several venues around the city, its main locale is Southwood United Church, 10690 Elbow Dr. SW. Artists booked for the upcoming season include Charlie A'Court, Christine Lavin, Connie Kaldor and J.P. Cormier.

Five Alive



Cape Breton's storied fiddle tunes fuel the boundless aspirations of Còig – a multi-talented traditional quintet galvanized by a trio of superb fiddlers. Sandy MacDonald charts their progress.

G lobal in- terest in traditional Cape Breton

music rises and then ebbs
like the tides along the bar-
ren shores of the island.

Its commercial appeal crested 20 years ago when Ashley MacIsaac, Natalie MacMaster and The Barra MacNeils took their electrifying fiddle music to the top of the pop charts and to sold-out concert halls around the world.

A new tide appears on the turn, though, and amongst its flotsam and jettison has emerged a young traditional band called Còig, Scots Gaelic for Five. With three dynamic fiddlers, a jazz-educated pianist, and a top-drawer multi-instrumentalist, Còig are thrilling the traditional music community with their flawless playing, infectious onstage energy, and passion for the celebrated fiddle tunes that first arrived in Cape Breton from Scotland nearly 200 years ago.

Nearly, the Còig fiddlers—Rachel Davis, Chrissy Crowley, and Colin Grant—have the absolute ability to attract the same international attention initially enjoyed by Natalie, Ashley, and Morris Rankin, Gerry Holland, Kyle MacNeil, and others.

"The interest in this music comes in stages," says Davis as she was packing for a late-summer Còig performance at the Salmon Arm Arts and Blues Festival. "There is definitely a market for this style of Cape Breton music," says the fiddler and singer, confident of the growing appetite for the honesty and beauty of this timeless art form.

"We're really proud that Natalie and Ashley have taken it all over the world. All of their success is a testament to the demand for this music."

Countless Celtic acts over the years have tried to contemporize the music by adding drums and bass, horn sections, electric guitars, and Latin percussion and African drums. Còig stays true to its acoustic roots, embracing the Scottish, Irish, and Acadian influences that naturally colour the music of Cape Breton. "We get a lot of joy in playing it, and especially that translates to the audience," says Davis. "We try to get them to clap and stomp along to the music. People seem to connect to Cape Breton music quickly and really latch on

to it easily."

Judging from audience response to Còig's music, people are connecting. The group recently released their debut CD *Five*, a shimmering collection of 14 lush instrumentals and vocal pieces that take the music far beyond the rural dance-hall roots that nurtured it for decades.

The centre point continues to be the fiddles, driving the recording with vitality, innovation, and precision. Underpinning the rhythm is Jason Roach's piano accompaniment, and each track gets a fresh flavouring with Darren McMullen's always tasteful string play—adding tenor banjo, mandolin, bouzouki, guitar, upright bass, whistles, and flute. (For good measure, he also sings a heartfelt version of *Mary and the Soldier* on the CD.)

The result is a joyful explosion of music that blossoms from the talents and passions of five very gifted young East Coast musicians. They all live comfortably in this music, nudging it into new territory but never losing the skein of its rich history.

Davis grew up in Big Baddeck, a postcard community on the banks of the Bras D'or Lakes. She picked up the fiddle at age 12, tutored by her grandfather, Clarence Long, now 91. "He was always playing music around the house," Long, who also ran the local barber-shop, performed as a younger man around the North Sydney area with his brothers.

Her grandfather took her to the regular Cape Breton Fiddlers Association meetings, where she plucked up the nerve to sit in and play with other musicians. She also met like-minded players at the nearby Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts, renowned for nurturing the Highland Scots Gaelic culture, particularly the fiddle, piping, and dancing traditions of Cape Breton. That's where Davis first met Chrissy Crowley, a gifted young fiddler from the Margaree Valley.

"Growing up, everyone aspired to be Natalie MacMaster," says Davis. "I was a huge fan of hers. I was really drawn to fiddlers who were good to play for dances, like John Morris and Howie [MacDonald]. That's something to aspire to, to have people dancing to your music."

The ability to get people dancing is at the heart of Cape Breton's traditional music. Unlike its more gentrified Scottish cousin, which shares many of the same tunes and melodies, the Cape Breton version of the music got the hot-house treatment in rural dances on the back roads in the little glens through the rugged countryside in places such as West Mabou, Glencoe Mills, South West Margaree, and Scotsville. Those dances locked in a rock-steady rhythm and drive at the heart of the

music.

Còig manages to keep that "drive 'er energy" at the core of their music, even while establishing a sophisticated voice. When they perform together onstage, it's a high-energy blast of power, rolling effortlessly through sets of tunes tempered in the heat of crowded dance halls.

The natural chemistry between the five musicians shouldn't come as a surprise. They've all shared the stage with one another in various combinations in recent years—McMullen, pianist Jason Roach, and fiddler Colin Grant play together in Sprag Session; Roach also accompanies Crowley on most of her shows; and McMullen plays and records with Rachel Davis.

The concept for those five acclaimed musicians sharing a stage arose in August 2010 for a one-off promotional tour of New England called A Taste of Celtic Colours. Phill McIntyre, director of the Skye Theatre in South Carthage, ME, and Joella Foulds of the Celtic Colours Festival put the quintet together for a 10-day tour.

The chemistry and synchronicity between the five players ensured this would be no one-off band. The idea from the outset was that each of the five players would be featured equally throughout the show—not three fiddlers and a secondary rhythm section.

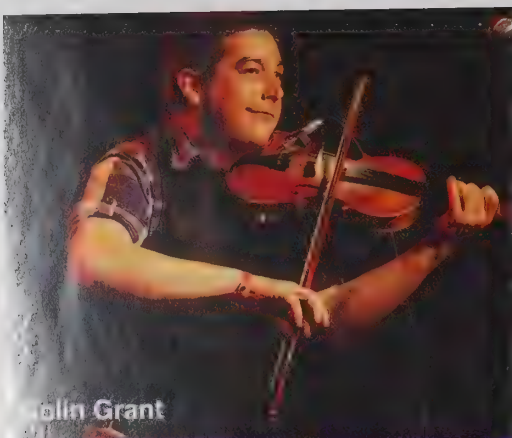
After many years as one of the region's top sidemen, Darren McMullen was thrilled at the prospect of sharing the spotlight equally with the rest of the band. The one non-Caper in the band (he's from Hardwood Lands, NS), McMullen has played onstage with many of the top folk acts in the country, including The Rankins, JP Cormier, David Francey, Dave Gunning, Gillian Boucher, Matt Andersen, and Sprague Sessions. He also has released three ECMA-nominated solo albums.

But Còig was finally going to offer the chance to equally share in the creative effort onstage.

"This was not going to be three fiddles and two guys in the background with black shirts," says McMullen, 38. "That was a big deal for me."

So in the summer of 2010, the five players piled suitcases and a dozen instrument cases into the back of a borrowed 1989 Coachman camper and headed west for Maine. They didn't have a master plan or even a set list.

"We were literally arranging sets in the back of the camper on the way to Maine," laughs Davis. "That was a great thing about not being in a cramped van—it made rehearsals easier. There seemed to be a unique energy when we played the tunes together. We all felt that was



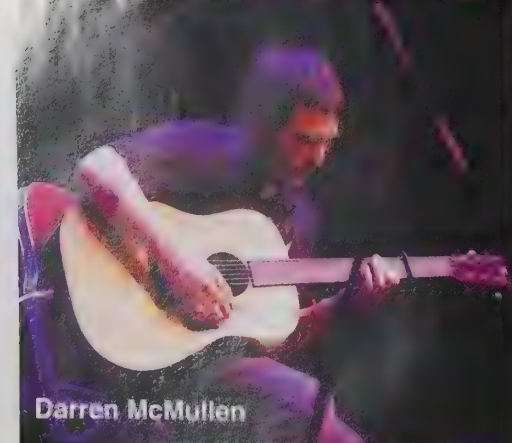
Colin Grant



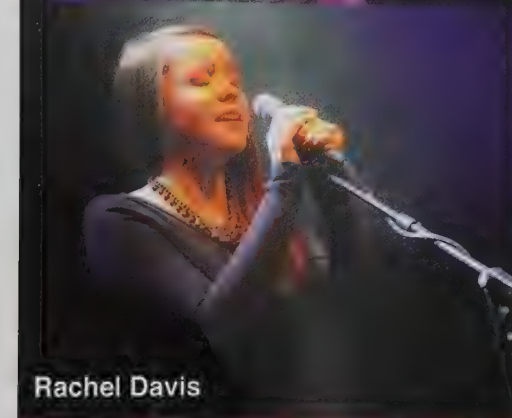
Darren McMullen



Rachel Davis



Darren McMullen



Rachel Davis

the most fun we ever had touring.”

With their encyclopedic knowledge of trad’ Celtic tunes, the five were able to string together a number of fresh fiddle sets to be played as a five-piece.

“This group is really special,” says Davis. “When we play together onstage, there is an electricity. We fall into each other’s rhythms pretty easily.”

For the first two years after the Maine tour, the five rarely performed as a group. Each was busy with other projects.

It was the offer of a main stage concert at the 2013 Shetland Folk Festival that instilled the group with the notion that they had something special happening.

“If there was a time and place where we truly thought the band would take off,” says McMullen, “Shetland was that place.”

Onstage, the five musicians share equally in “fronting” the group.

“That’s coming a lot easier for me,” says McMullen. “That first Maine tour changed my career. I was really on the edge of giving it up. I had gone through three months without a gig. I figured I’d had a good run but I had to pay the mortgage for my house.”

“That tour forced me to take a turn on the mic. I was getting a chance to talk to the audience and not be just a side guy—everyone takes a turn being featured.”

Being forced into the occasional front-man slot has even prompted McMullen to sing during Còig shows. He had recorded some vocal pieces on his solo albums and now steps out every performance to sing a tune or two: “It’s still unnerving for me but I had to do it.”

That insistence on each sharing equally has also allowed Rachel Davis to emerge as an engaging singer onstage. Her gorgeous soft voice has an ancient quality that perfectly complements her fiddle playing.

At the heart of the Cape Breton style is the fiery drive to keep the dancers moving in the traditional square sets. Most nights in the summer and fall, you can hear the strains of fiddle and piano from one of the rural community halls. Inside will be a mix of locals who can effortlessly dance the square sets, stepping lightly with arms hanging loosely at their sides, and happy visitors who drop in to experience this invigorating live music, played much as it has been for generations in Cape Breton.

Some say the music was incubated on the isolated island for generations. But now there is much more to and fro, with Scottish and Irish players coming to the island to perform and study. And the Capers are travelling the world with their fiddles under their arms.

In June 2014, Davis went to Australia with

a group of Scottish fiddlers. That experience allowed her a close-up examination of the differences between the Scots and Cape Breton style of fiddling.

Though the fiddlers on both sides of the Atlantic play many of the same tunes, the main differences come in the ornamentation of the notes and the attack on the strings. Cape Bretoners are fond of putting a “little dirt” in their sound, digging in with the rosin-caked horsehair to add power and dynamics to the playing.

“There is a certain amount of rawness to Cape Breton playing, where we throw in some wild notes—there’s definitely a little more grit in our sound.”

Davis studied the auld Gaelic language the Scots immigrants brought with them to eastern Nova Scotia in the 19th century. Though the number of first-language speakers has declined over the years, Davis’s grandmother still “has the Gaelic” and she picked up her love of the language from her.

When Davis is getting ready to record a song in Gaelic, she meets with local speakers and sings the song for them and has them correct any pronunciation issues. She did just that before recording *Nach Muladach Muladach Duine Leis Fhein*, a gorgeous milling song first heard by Joanne MacIntyre, a Gaelic singer from the Mabou area of Cape Breton.

“It just seemed like something we could work with. It’s not your typical milling song the way we arranged it but it has lots of drive.”

Davis is not a fluent Gaelic speaker but is comfortable to read it and sing it. After she learned the new milling song, she had to teach the chorus phonetically to the rest of Còig and their harmonies.

“We gave that song a whole new life since I started teaching the phonetics to the band,” laughs Davis. “It doesn’t have the speed of traditional milling frolic song but I wanted to have those voices singing on the chorus. That gives it the air of the traditional singing while we’re ramping it up just a touch.”

Davis also recorded Dougie MacLean’s gorgeous *She Loves Me (When I Try)* for the album. She’d heard a live streaming broadcast of MacLean performing the haunting song about separation and the love that holds people together. She was so enamoured she couldn’t listen to anything else for a week.

For all the great fiddlers who have come out of Cape Breton over the years, few are singing of note. That sets Davis apart.

“I’m still reluctant to call myself a singer, but I don’t feel I’ve earned it yet. I do enjoy singing Gaelic songs and when I started singing in

blic, that's all I would sing. My grandmother grew up speaking Gaelic and always had Gaelic songs on the go. I heard those a lot. I did singing in English a lot more nerve wracking—people can tell when you make a mistake in English.”

The recording process was an interesting challenge for these dynamic players who changed their sound playing live shows, feet pounding out the downbeat on the wooden stage.

The first real rehearsals we ever had were getting ready for this album,” says McMullen. The fiddlers would discuss particular tunes, then daisy chain them into workable sets. Because the original concept of Còig was to give each of the five players equal showcasing time on stage, there was less emphasis on musical interplay. That's all changed as the group solidifies and plays more pieces together live.

Their arrangements have also become more intricate, with McMullen writing charts and complex string parts for many tunes. It is that exquisite musical interplay that makes this group greater than the sum of its parts.

For the first shows that Còig played live, the fiddlers often didn't know the pieces being played by the others. But for the recording, the band had to be unified with everyone contributing to every piece.

We decided we needed to learn everyone's tunes and come up with some new music.”

So the five gathered out at McMullen's home in Stillwater Lake outside Halifax for a couple of weeks around Christmas, rehearsed a number of pieces and then recorded them—on their iPhones.

That's the beauty of acoustic music: you don't need any gear,” he says. “We'd record the pieces we'd rehearsed and listen to it the next day. I think we each have the entire record in some form on our phones.

We plugged Jason's piano into a Fender guitar amp, sat around in a circle and figured out the record.”

The original plan was to have each musician choose tunes for their own set and then add a couple of songs plus some spirited group sets of reels and jigs. The process was very democratic. Everyone had a say in how the music was selected and arranged.

However, the plan kept changing as more tunes were brought to the table. Roach brought *Boys of Ballisodare*, a traditional Irish slip jig that he and Crowley had already recorded separately. Roach thought there was something more to be divined from the piece, more creative possibilities.

At first we worried if we'd have enough material but in the end we had piles. Once Jason

Roach gets involved, everything you planned goes out the window,” chuckles McMullen.

“He comes up with the coolest stuff. He has a jazz degree so he plays the ‘expensive’ chords!”

So with the pre-production completed in McMullen's basement, the group headed to Lakewind Studio in Cape Breton, largely motivated by the magnificent full-size grand piano there. The band bunked into the studio for five days, allowing them to rehearse material in the evening and then head into the recording studio fresh in the morning ready to lay down the tracks.

“We'd record all day then take a break and play through what we were going to record the next day. That allowed us to solidify everything, to keep it fresh in our minds.”

The band recorded Roach's piano parts and most of the fiddle tracks in the beautiful Point Aconi studio, with McMullen playing along for the energy he brings to the process.

Then he took the tracks back to his Big Red Studio in the house he shares with Davis in Stillwater Lake and re-recorded his parts, ensuring everything went down exactly as he wanted.

With all the instrumental tracks in place, the band headed finally to Dave Gunning's Wee House of Music studio in Pictou, NS, to record

the vocals tracks and a few other instrumental parts.

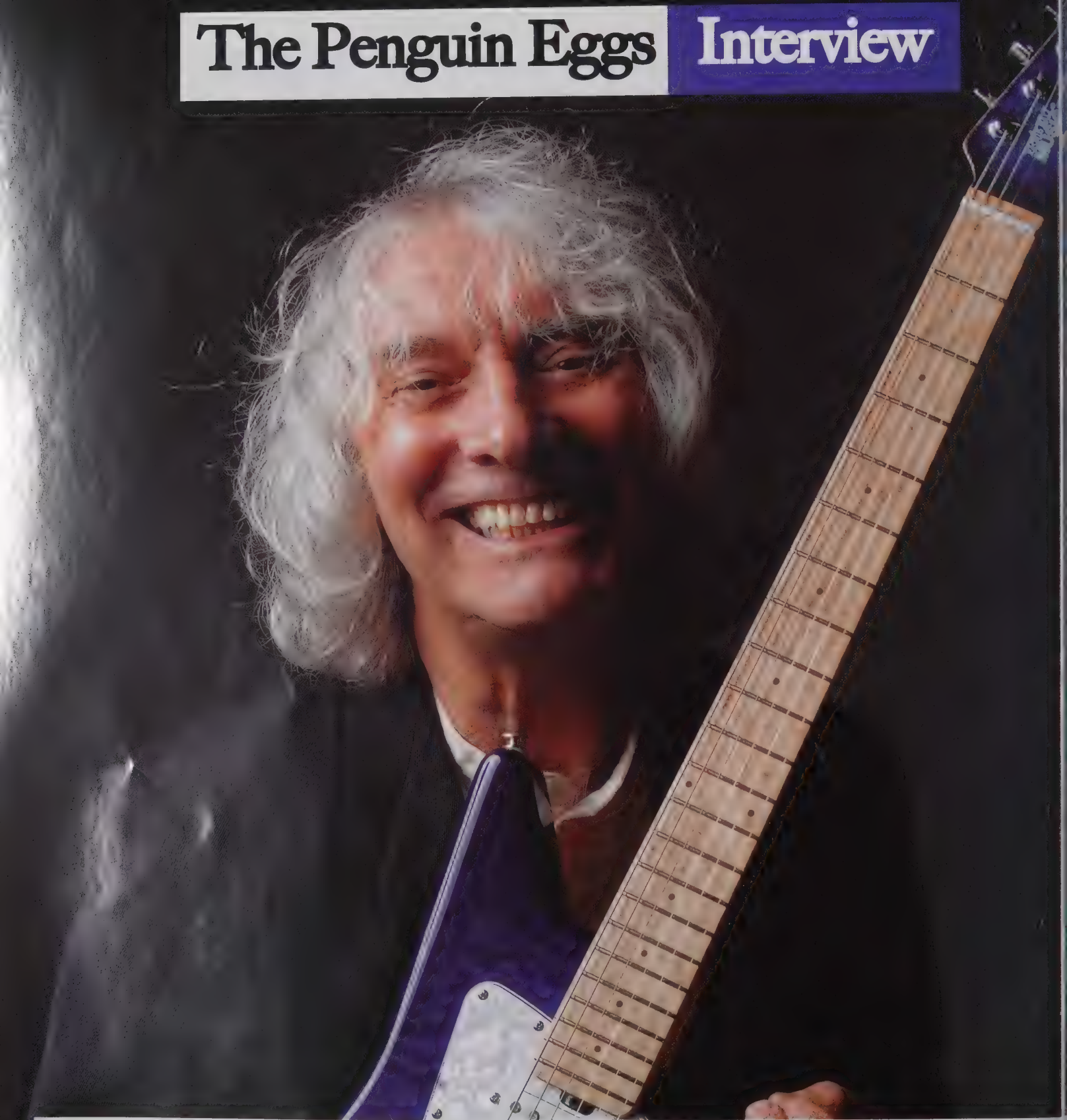
The laid-back Gunning is a master of recording vocals. Davis had recorded parts of her solo album there and felt very comfortable working with the award-winning musician and studio ace. Còig wrapped up the recording there—lead vocals, harmony vocals, and a few instrumental tracks including McMullen's flutes and whistles.

With the new album complete, Coig then signed with P.E.I.-based artist representative Bob Jensen, one of the most respected agents in the Canadian folk music industry. Jensen is enthusiastic about the young band that he calls one of the most exciting live acts he's seen in years.

The group will play the Ottawa Folk Festival in September, the Rejigged Festival in Dartmouth, NS, and Celtic Colours in Cape Breton in October and is already booked for an extensive tour in Austria next summer. Even as the excitement for Coig continues to build, the young players are taking it in stride.

“It's pretty laid back,” shrugs Davis. “We try to have fun onstage and not take things too seriously. There is a history of (these tunes) being good dance music and community music. Hopefully that spirit comes out when we take the music out of Cape Breton.”





Albert Lee

“Musician’s musician” or “picker’s picker” are among the more shopworn clichés in the lexicon, and yet Albert Lee stands near the top of that Google query by any rational definition.

He is simply one of the greatest electric guitarists extant, and has been for decades. His contributions to popular music—especially in the realm of roots practitioners—is the stuff of

legend, with a platinum-class CV and recorded legacy that could reduce the crustiest observer to gushing superlatives. Lee’s unmistakable trademarked finger-picking style continues to dazzle and inspire a new generation of players world wide.

The spry English grandfather with the signature lop-sided grin has been married and living in Malibu for

years, and splits his incessant touring schedule between his own American band and with Albert Lee and Hogan Heroes, his longtime U.K./Euro alter ego. We met up with the Grammy winner over a sensible vegetarian meal of pasta and Aussie shiraz following a concert at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

Questions By Alan Kellogg

So let's begin with your 70th birthday celebrations this year, which included two sold-out all-star concerts at Chelsea's Cadogan Hall in March, with a DVD and CD to spring from it soon.

met up with this guy in England named Dave Mann. I knew he was in the video business and he approached me with the idea to commemorate my 70th with a documentary about my life and a live concert for a DVD. He'd previously done a video with us in Hogan's Heroes and I liked him, he had done a pretty good job.

I'm one of those guys who never sees the big picture—I'm thinking about the next gig and when I have to get up in the morning. So I was a bit skeptical about any grandiose ideas.

But it mushroomed, and it all worked out. Yeah, the concerts were magical. We rehearsed a lot, for several days before and each day of the shows at the hall. It was nice to be the centre of attention, and to see so many old friends step up to the plate. I thought they'd do a few bits and I'd do mine but as it happened I was onstage almost all the time, running on adrenalin.

What's in store for the autumn?

I finished with the American band at the end of August and am back in the U.K. with Hogan's Heroes. Those dates are booked at least a year in advance so it's hard to change things. As I said, in October, I'll be playing at a tribute to the Everlys at the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland as lead guitar, with Rodney Crowell as the musical director. That means a lot to me. I lost Phil this year...

Let's back up. What was your childhood like in Blackheath? I understand you have many blood and your father was a musician.

Yes, Lee is a Romany name in England and I have a certain amount of Romany blood of which we are proud of in the family. My father was a construction worker but he played accordion and piano in the army and in pubs as an amateur, the hits of the '30s and '40s. It was a beautiful, two-storey flat with a wonderful garden in a lovely Victorian. And it was so close to central London, only 20 minutes on the tube from Charing Cross. I took piano lessons at first with two different teachers, and had a good ear, but I didn't like to practice. Then Bill Haley and Lonnie Donegan came out, and the guitar was king. I borrowed one from a mate, and by 1957 my parents knew I was getting serious

and bought me a cheap Spanish guitar, which I immediately changed to steel strings. We got a little group together and did skiffle, sometimes made a few shillings.

When did you know a musical career was to be the chosen path?

Early on. Well, I was slung out of school in '58 and did a couple of day jobs. I finally got a half-decent guitar—a Hofner President—and was surprised at how much easier it was to play. I started to take a keen interest in what was going on musically in rock 'n' roll—Elvis, Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, Gene Vincent, and so on. The first album I bought was *Chirpin' Crickets* by Buddy Holly and the Crickets.

You began to play around, able to buy better American gear when the post-war U.K. luxury tax was lifted in 1960, hanging around seminal London west end music haunts like the 2i's Coffee Bar in Soho and Selmer's music shop. What were the influences?

Certainly Scotty Moore, James Burton, Cliff Gallup. And just mixing with musicians at 2i's. Jimmy Page liked my Les Paul and Supro amp setup so much that he bought the same gear.

Skiffle, rock 'n' roll, and rockabilly were obvious touchstones. When did country music come in?

There was a radio program on BBC originally called *Guitar Club* and later *Saturday Club* hosted by a guy named Brian Matthew (now 85 and still at it!). It had a segment called *Country Corner* and I heard a version of the fiddle tune *Arkansas Traveler* by Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant on an album called *Two Guitars Country Style*. It just destroyed me—I thought I could never do that...

Tenure with Brit R&B legend Chris Farlowe (and a 1966 No. 1 U.K. hit *Out of Time*) was followed by a short-lived, Lee-led country outfit and finally, to Heads, Hands and Feet with Ray Smith and Tony Colton—the country/roots/rock ensemble that proved to be the celestial bridge to America. You had critical success and eventually a deal with no less than Ahmet Ertegun at Atlantic, though you left the band before the third album (ahem) *Old Soldiers Never Die* was released. Why?

The bass player [Chas Hodges] and I quit,



Albert Lee:
The grin
remains the

yeah. I don't know, maybe we were afraid of success. We had this idea that if we hit it big, all the money would disappear, or something.

Still, Head, Hands and Feet attracted a lot of attention among North American cognoscenti, and not so many years after you shelled out shillings for the Buddy Holly LP, you found yourself employed as a Cricket on tour. An album with Jackson Browne recorded in London was never released but led to sessions in L.A. for the singer/songwriter's excellent first album, *Saturate Before Using*. And then ... Joe Cocker?

Working with Don Everly was in there, too. With Joe in '74, his band fell apart before he went on tour and the drummer from HH&F and I were quickly recruited and off we went. I ended up living in Joe's guest house in Malibu. Yes, it was true, it was pretty tough, the partying. We had to keep people away from him because they'd give him stuff and he'd take anything anyone handed him. But we got through it.



Albert Lee: *California Dreamin'*

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Playing in the Hot Band changed everything, no?

I had seen Emmylou play (and met Gram Parsons earlier) and used to hang out at an amazing place called the Sundance Saloon in San Dimas, California. Don Everly kind of was the catalyst but people like Glen D. Hardin, Buddy Holly, Jimi Hendrix, Byron Berline, Doug Dillard, and others would be there, and they accepted this English guy who played like they did. Remember, back in the U.K. it was Pink Floyd and the Beatles that dominated then. Even before that, I had no interest when Hendrix came in with the Marshall stacks. I was all about roots music, and that didn't exist for me in England in terms of making a living. Playing with Emmylou then was easy—she was doing a lot of Buck Owens and Waylon Jennings covers, and I knew all that material. It was amazing that I replaced one of my old heroes, James Burton—who had gone on to work with Elvis. At this point I knew I would never go back—I was in heaven.

By 1979, you had to make a major choice.

That's what Jerry Moss [the M in A&M Records] did. He offered me a solo album—to this day I think he thought he had signed Alvin Lee—which neither of us was that keen on. But I went back later and re-recorded with some Hot Band players and was pretty proud of it—it still stands up. But I worked with Eric Clapton—we had known each other since the mid-'60s—on an album for a guy called Marc Bolan. Either Eric or his manager asked if I'd like to go out on tour. So what was it to be? I could go that, or put together a band and support my own album? I went with Eric and survived several purges—he liked having an English guy around—until the inevitable firing, when he was in rough shape. It was the full treatment, no limos, the best hotels—we were all mates and treated equally.

Which was fortunately quickly followed by your longest association of your career.

The Everly Brothers reunion concert in '83 at the Royal Albert Hall began a 26-year relationship, a great run. It was tough to lose Phil this year. There were lean times, when the Everlys couldn't tour for a few months and you got behind on your mortgage. But the Hogan's Heroes thing started in '87 and Bill Wyman put the Rhythm Kings together 13 years ago. So there's always had something going on, and lately maybe not enough time to relax a bit. I want to spend more time at home.

All great electric guitar heroes have endorsement deals but your long association with the Ernie Ball/Music Man organization seems special. Sterling Ball is your daughter's godfather.

That's true. Way back when in Head, Hands and Feet, Ernie heard *Country Boy* on the radio and was quite surprised to learn that it was written and played by an Englishman. So they came to hear me and it all began. I helped out on the silhouette [prototype] of the current Music Man I play, which is all I play onstage. I was never into that 12-guitars-and-a-tech thing. Before I began playing the Music Man, I used to wonder: should I bring the Tele tonight, or the Strat, or whatever? But then how can you build up a style of your own like that, because guitars are so personal. I'm totally at home with the Music Man.

What do you think of contemporary country music these days?

I'm not too keen on it. I like Americana but the hat and pickup brigade is not what I grew up with and I don't like it. Some of them make good records and they are often well-produced but they don't grab me.

It's a long, long list, but do any particular concerts stick out over the years?

Sure, there are important ones. Funny, but many have happened at the Royal Albert Hall,

like the Everlys reunion at the Concert for George. There's just something special about that place for me.

You were the subject of a recent biography—*Country Boy* by Derek Watts, with a forward by Eric Clapton. What did you think of it?

Well, it's pretty good but I didn't keep an eye on it through the whole process, which was a mistake because things were left out. All the more reason to inspire me to do something on my own. There's still time.

No doubt. You have seen many fall over the years and yet here you are, still playing as well as ever and likely singing with more confidence than in years past. The secret of sustainability?

I try! But I do have a theory. In a way I was lucky that I never was in a huge band making tons of money. I didn't get into the big drug thing—I could take them or leave them and didn't go looking if they weren't around. So I was fortunate in that respect. I see guys from the '60s and '70s bands and I don't see them playing very well. The trouble is, they're not playing all the time. I am—I'm playing all the time. And it shows, I think.

Hear, hear. Long may you run....

This interview was edited for publication.

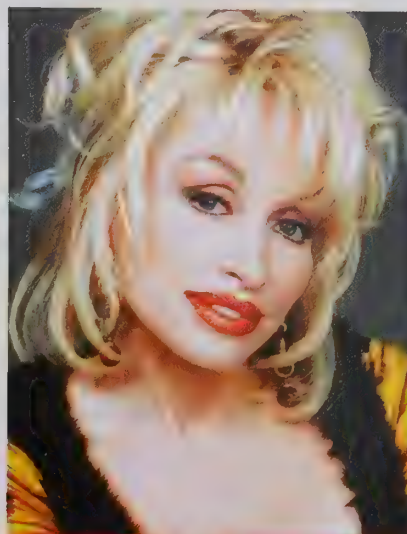


Albert Lee

Reviews



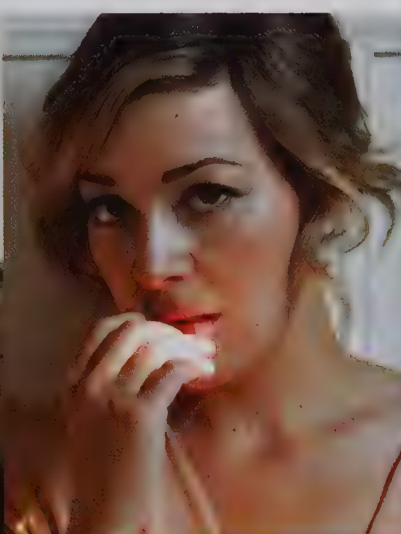
59 Natalie Merchant



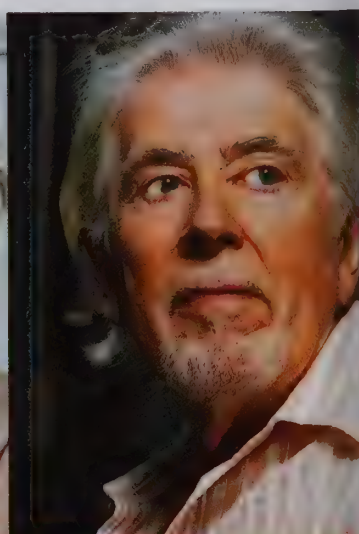
59 Dolly Parton



63 Duncan Chisholm



59 Jill Barber



63 John Mayall



Eliza and Martin Carthy

Martin Carthy Eliza Carthy

Moral of the Elephant (Topic Records)

What a marvellous way to celebrate the 75th anniversary of this venerable record label! It's the first album from two of Musica glicana's finest exponents. Those of you who have been paying attention will remember astonishingly precocious Ms. Carthy's *Red Rice* double CD which dad weighed in with considerable gravitas. That was a good while ago, and now we know it was just a brief taste of things to come.

Father and daughter provide nature accompaniment on fiddle and sing solo alternately as well as together in unison and in harmony. There are nine traditional songs and two covers, one of which is the wonderfully melancholic *Happiness* by Molly Drake (Nick's mother), sung with great feeling by Eliza. *The Queen of Hearts*, which Martin did on his first album, appears here. It is delivered with a sombrely compelling duet, showcasing their ability to twist and turn their voices together in a manner that only those with

shared genes can master. The recording process was described by Martin as "hothousing two songs for four hours every day and then going into the studio from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. with the aim of recording those two songs". Everything was done live without guest musicians. The immediacy and life in evidence throughout *The Moral of the Elephant* serves to prove that this is an excellent approach to capturing the essence of a song. Providing, of course, you have large chops and the necessary guts, which, of course, these two have in spades. Once you've heard it you'll be like the elephant of the title. You'll never forget.

– By Tim Readman

Còig

Five (Independent)



If you haven't been to Celtic Colours International Festival on

Cape Breton Island then there's a big gap in your musical education. It's the kind of event where anything can happen and you only have to shut your eyes and throw a rock in order to hit a great Celtic musician. The idea of taking five of the most talented solo artists on the island and forming a band

for a promotional tour for the festival resulted in the recruitment of fiddlers Colin Grant, Chrissy Crowley and Rachel Davis; pianist Jason Roach and multi-instrumentalist Darren McMullen. All agreed that this was a band worthy of sustaining and, on hearing this debut CD by this soon-to-be famous five, I can only concur.

All three fiddlers play with tremendous energy and expression as they drive the tunes along. Roach's left hand is like the hammer of Thor – you don't need a bass player when this lad's around. McMullen shows great versatility on guitar, mandolin, whistle and banjo and adds variety and colour

to the performances. There's also wonderful singing from both McMullen and Davis to top it all off. Coig are a real force to be reckoned with and deserve to be in your CD collection. Trust me, you will want to hear this lot, and I can tell you from my own experience that they are dynamite live. As they say in Gaelic "sheideadh e na h-adharcan de ghobhar!"

– By Tim Readman

9Bach

Tincian (Real World)



Yes my friends, this is one great CD! Imagine the groove of Bris-

tolian trip-hoppers Massive Attack and Portishead, with a sprinkling of Laurie Anderson and a huge dollop of the culture of North Wales's mountainous landscape around Gerlan and Bethesda, topped with imaginative vocals sung in the sonorous Brythonic Celtic language of the Welsh. You can't imagine that? Then don't worry, just get hold of a copy of *Tincian* and give yourself a treat.

For those of you unfamiliar with Welsh, there's informative sleeve notes to help you get into the mood of the material. Really though, there's no need to worry about all that. Just get a copy and play it loud and shut your eyes. You'll get it soon enough. Essential listening. 10/10.

– By Tim Readman



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Gathering Sparks

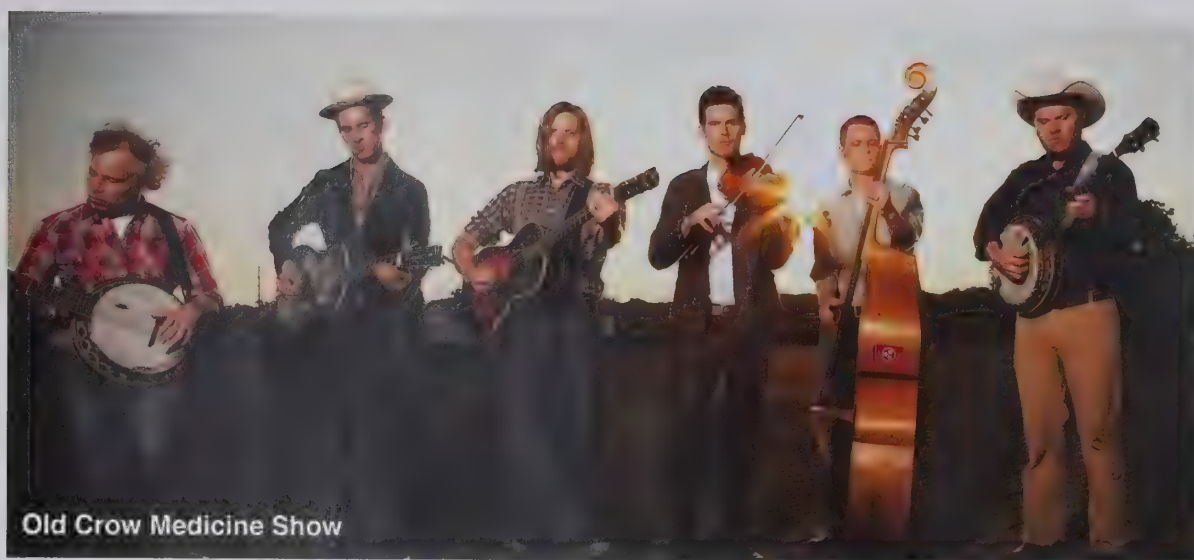
Gathering Sparks (Independent)



From the get-go, you'd not likely put these three artists together as a

angular trio because each of them, independently, represents their own distinct musical personality. Dave Goldberg possesses a powerful folk presence with a big voice and unwavering social conscience. Tim Turton is blues through-and-through and a particularly skilled guitarist/multi-instrumentalist.

Joe Lewis mines a more spiritual sound, with a gentle, yet impactful, voice dressed in a Mother Earth demeanor. Yet, six phenomenal songs later, you'd wish you were holding a full-length album in your hands. This Toronto-Guelph collective are clearly turned on by one another's music yet it's the musical merge they achieve that accelerates *Gathering Sparks* into full combustion. Goldberg's lead banjo tribute to the late Oliver Broer, *I Ain't Finished With This Rainy Yet*, sparkles with a gospel air, giving way to beautiful harmonies, embellished by Turton's ringing slide resonator guitar. Goldberg's banjo sets up Lewis's folkish *Spirits in the Graveyard*, which gets a tasteful boost from Turton's slide resonator and Lewis's accordion. Turton's original *Louisiana Blues* is feel-good, plenty, acoustic blues, revealing an equally powerful voice in Turton while Lewis's piano and Goldberg's ukulele lend a sense of swing; their harmonies elevate the celebration. The best track on the disc is, however, Turton's own *Here*—lifted skyward by Lewis's sympathetic vocal, power-trapped by the trio's ability to ground everything they do with rich, honeyed harmonies. Goldberg's uke-driven *Do You Want To Get Married* is a feel-good visit to the fairgrounds and a natural singalong, a strength of their live presentations. The rich resonator tone that defines Turton's *In For The Night* is fully realized as Goldberg adds her acoustic guitar while the band's



Old Crow Medicine Show

voices take this homegrown homage to 'turning in' (if not rebirth) to new heights—another fireside singalong waiting to happen. The best news is that, given their varied musical interests and specialties, Gathering Sparks is a true group binding the individual skills of its members together as one. Here's hoping their audiences will fan the flames from there.

— By Eric G. Thom

Bonnie Dobson

Take Me For a Walk In the Morning Dew
(Hornbeam)



There is perhaps nothing as eerily and gently chilling as Bonnie

Dobson's early 1960s dirge for the nuclear apocalypse, *Morning Dew*. This and other Dobson originals, such as *I Got Stung*, *Winter's Going*, and *Rainy Windows*, are on this fresh new recording, along with traditional songs such as *Peter Amberley*, *V'La L'Bon Vent*, and *Born in the Country*. Canadi-



Bonnie Dobson

an-born Dobson was an early star in the '60s folk movement, and might have become a megastar but she changed her plans and by the late '80s left music for good, or so it was thought. Kudos to Hornbeam for bringing her out of retirement to record this rock and blues-laced treatment of her neglected repertoire. Still in fine voice—a voice once compared to the young Joan Baez—Dobson, with a tight band dubbed Her Boys, has given these songs the musical treatment they deserve. *Take Me For a Walk in the Morning Dew* is a wonderful gift from Bonnie Dobson to her many long-term fans, and listening to it should create many new ones as well. A touchstone recording.

— By Gene Wilburn

Trampled By Turtles

Wild Animals (Banjodad Records)



Minneapolis folk-rockers Trampled By Turtles continue to slow down

from their vaunted speedgrass sound on their seventh album, with a little guidance from Low frontman Alan Sparhawk. Known for blazing through bluegrass covers of alt-rock songs, reconfiguring old-time sounds for an audience used to being jacked on pop energy, the band has turned a corner. They show vulnerability on *Ghosts*, dally with traditional gospel bluegrass on *Nobody Knows*, and chase a kind of elliptical, post-modern roots sound through-

out. It doesn't work perfectly on *Wild Animals*, where the material seems a little weak, but you can see where this direction could do them well down the road.

— By Tom Murray

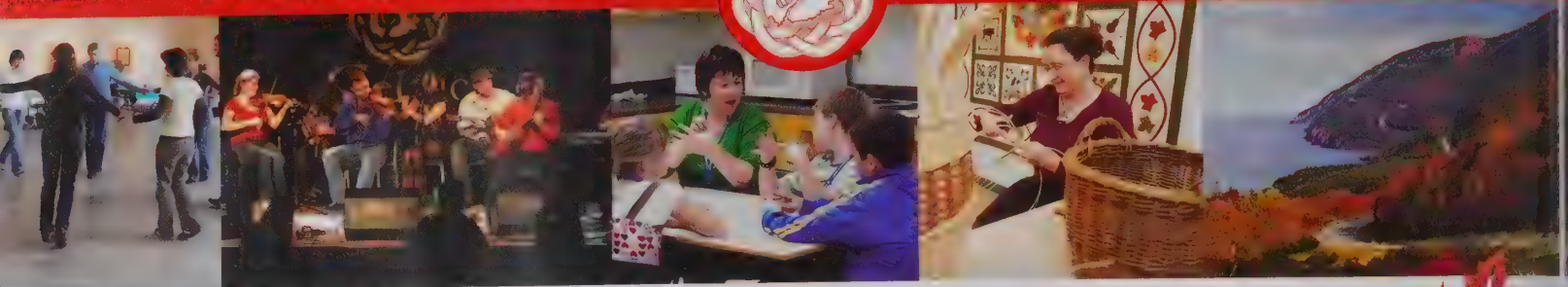
Old Crow Medicine Show

Remedy (Nettwerk)



Old Crow Medicine Show—OCMS, if you like—could get by

on the cred of their affiliations. Legendarily discovered playing on a street corner by Doc Watson, known for turning a Bob Dylan song fragment into a signature hit, captured for posterity on their first few albums by David Rawlings (Gillian Welch), the pedigree almost precedes the music itself. On *Remedy*, their fifth full-length for Nettwerk, the band manifests the sterling chops and thorough-going, old-timey sensibilities that have earned accolades and all those high-falutin' associations. Though they sometimes roll along on a rumble of rhythmic augmentation—as on *Sweet Amarillo*, their second Dylan co-write—OCMS's string contingent sounds like it could walk into any barn dance and burn the joint down. They can really take things down to a gentle but lush strum, as on *Dearly Departed Friend*, the heart-wrenching portrait of life carrying on after the loss of an unlucky soldier pal. But the rowdy board-stomper remains



Celtic Colours 2014!

A GLANCE AT THIS YEAR'S FESTIVAL WITH *Executive Director Joella Foulds*



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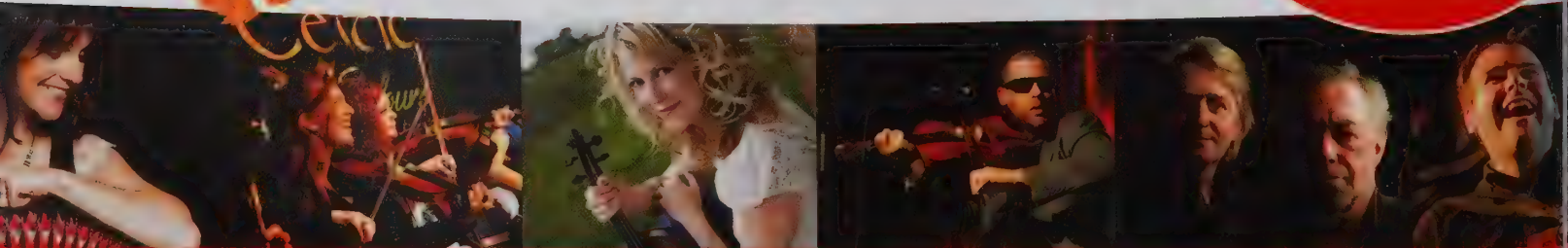
Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIsaac, Tony McManus, Tim Edey, and David Francey. Family groups the Campbells of Greepe, the MacDonald's of Glenuig, the Chaisson Family, and the Wrigley Sisters all testify to the influence of family on their music.

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their reliable default setting, amplified by the giddy call-and-response of *8 Dogs 8 Banjos*, the humming velocity of *Tennessee* and the minor-key urgency of *Shit Creek*. It's hard to imagine comedy hurting the boys' reputation one bit.

— By Scott Lingley

Red June

Ancient Dreams (Organic Records)



Is there such a thing as a perfect album? Of course we don't think

art in those terms but it's an interesting thought experiment. There are works of art that feel perfect, such as Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, Greg Foley's *Thank You Bear*, two children's books that are about as perfect as you could imagine a children's book to be. There might be other examples, too: Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait*, (1658), *Citizen Kane*, *Jabberwocky*, the albums Louis Armstrong made with Ella Fitzgerald.

What puts them in the running, are we to play this game, are the things that they share: the artifice less apparent than the message, the picture transcends the brush strokes. They are economical, powerful without shouting, made with care and skill though the priorities come forward, not the storytellers. They avoid clichés, and offer more than you get at first glance without demanding or requiring study. They affect us, they feel close to us, they display humanity even when winking an eye. And if there are any faults, we willingly choose to overlook them for a visceral appreciation of what they have to offer.

This is all very grand, I realize, but I'd say that the latest release from Red June, titled *Ancient Dreams*, does all those things. The result is clear, the musicianship is top-notch, the vocal harmonies are fresh and atypical. It's a quiet album, but for the most part, and the songs are allowed to speak for themselves. And it's remarkably rich.

I Saw You In August is a study in arranging, complex and delicately crafted to allow the focus to shift around the story that's being told. It's brilliant, actually. In fact, the whole album is, and for the same reasons.

Is it a perfect album? I know that it sounds ridiculous but frankly I'd venture that it is. If I'm wrong, I'd be interested to know why. I really would.

— By Glen Herbert

Daby Touré & Skip McDonald

Call My Name (Real World/Proper Records)



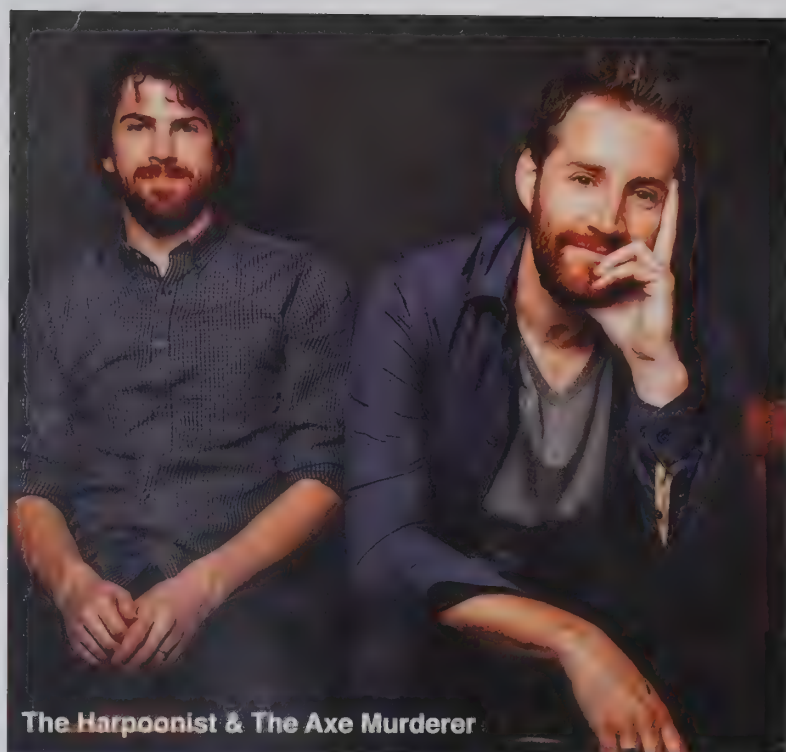
This is a powerful combination— instrumentally and vocally—

as a young West African singer and multi-instrumentalist joins together with an Ohio-based, African-American bluesman, Skip (Little Axe) McDonald, at twice the age. Yet, as was obvious from their first meeting, their ability to meld their voices and their instruments proved uncanny—and they've been on the festival circuit ever since.

As with most world music, there's an overall effervescence to the duo. The instrumentation is dramatic and the recording quality remarkably bright and flawless. Lush, multi-layered percussion meets buoyant guitars and, at times, duelling, layered vocals. Touré, having descended from a long line of musical genius, brings a rich heritage of African roots music to the fore, with an aggressive pop edge while McDonald's tour of duty has served raw blues, reggae, dub, funk, and hip-hop alike—from Little Axe to Tackhead and Living Color.

The combination is more the sum of its parts. McDonald's guitar grooves dictate the course while Touré's multilingual singing results in a strong world pop perspective. A truly invigorating coming together of two worlds which, ultimately, share the same origin.

— By Eric G. Thom



The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer

A Real Fine Mess (Independent)



Shawn Hall (The Harpoonist) and Matthew Rogers (The

Axe Murderer) are on a roll. Their third disc, *A Real Fine Mess*, proves an evolution of their sound—one fully embraces soul and R&B, adding to their already-heady arsenal of blues, rock, reggae, and most things in between. The resulting bevy of 14 originals reveals enhancements to their overall sound, from the depth of the arrangements to the quality of songwriting and overall sound quality.

Many songs rise to the surface, going well beyond their original scope of raw, primitive blues as defined by little more than Hall's heavily processed vocals and ragged harp playing augmented by Rogers's jagged Telecaster barbs and heavy-handed foot percussion. There's more variety here than previously experienced and the addition of horns and the lush background vocals of Alexa Dirks, Dawn Pemberton, and Andrina Turenne fully flesh out their sound and overall musical ideas.

A Real Fine Mess is anything but. A positive move forward for

a band who's Black Keys-derived 'simple idea' has proven Hall and Rogers to be a true musical force field. The Harpoonist and the Axe Murderer have demonstrated that the sky's their only limit—and, at this rate, that may prove slightly restrictive.

— By Eric G. Thom

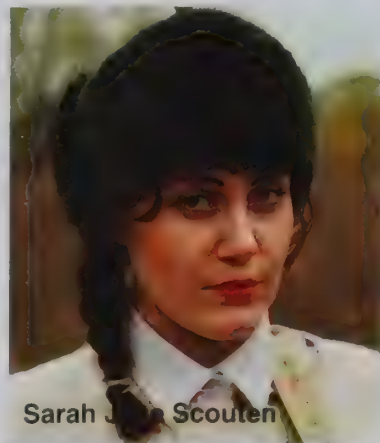
Sarah Jane Scouten

The Cape (Independent)



I remember Sarah Jane Scouten as one of the kids who

showed up to the bluegrass camp in Sorrento, BC, along with her parents and the rest of the wonderful gaggle of folks from Bowen Island. Well, she's all grown up now, and she picked up more than a thing or two from her musical elders along



Sarah Jane Scouten

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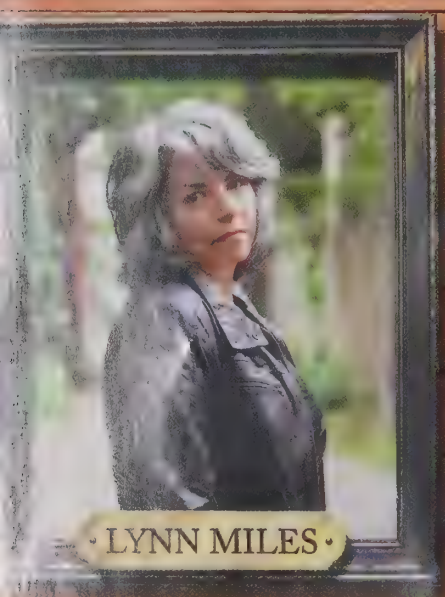


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way.

Now living in Montreal, Scouten
s created, along with her fine
ing band, a fine acoustic roots
um that comfortably bounces
ween folk, country, old-time
d country swing, with even a
le French thrown in to mark her
opted home. With a voice that's
miniscent of early Nanci Grif-
n, her songs range from country
mour on *No Reasoning* ("I've
a thing for you like I need a
k in the shin") to downright
sterious on the title track, about
lace of her childhood on Bowen
ere you could easily get lost.
The album is produced by An-
w Collins who, as usual, brings
the best in the songs. Finally,
credit has to go Scouten's
nd—Sarah Frank on fiddle,
ke Fraser on mandolin and
uthieu Lacombe on bass—who
r with her and play a major part
making this a disc you'll likely
back to many times.

By Mike Sadava

Morris Smither

on the Levee (Signature Sounds)

It's not every
artist who gets
to celebrate 50
years of making
music—much
s one who has 50 years of
sic worth celebrating—so
ris Smither, who turns 70 this
vember, has acknowledged
s milestone in style by revis-
g his back catalogue with
help of some special guests.
t even with a few adornments
rtuesy of folks ranging from
adon Wainwright III (on *What
y Say*) to Allen Toussaint to
na Colley (bari sax player for
eemed alt-rockers Morphine),
ither's time-burnished voice,
es-steeped acoustic pickings
l shuffling feet command
tre stage. The vibe is generally
duced but the maestro has lost
ne of his subtle intensity over
course of a half century. Start-
with the lilting blues lament
vil's *Got Your Man* from his
-year-old debut album, Smithers
olders consistently over 25 of



The Barr Brothers

his Delta-dredged songs, reclaim-
ing *Love You Like a Man* and *Slow
Surprise* from Bonnie Raitt and
Emmylou, respectively, with mag-
isterial delivery. The years haven't
just been kind, they've made the
callow young blues interpreter into
a commanding presence across the
wide world of folk.

— By Scott Lingley

The Barr Brothers

Sleeping Operator (Secret City Records)



Montreal's
Barr Brothers
were previously
known as mem-
bers of The
Slip, a Boston-based jazz-rock act
that melded indie hooks with the
instrumental sprawl and virtuosity
of a jam band. Most of a decade
later, siblings Andrew and Brad
have relocated to their hometown
and reoriented their approach,
retaining the hooks but framing
them in gentler, multi-layered,
acoustic-propelled arrangements
tinged with slide guitar, percus-
sion, keys, harmonies, and various
subtly exotic textures courtesy
Sarah Page's harp, the sound of
which skews more toward the Ma-
lian kora than ethereal earwash.
Their sophomore studio outing
puts musical chops firmly in

service of emotive, finely wrought
songs such as the stunning opener
Static Orphan/Love Ain't Enough
and the rapturous *Come in the Wa-
ter*. They've also maintained from
their wood-shedding days the mu-
sical cohesion of a working band,
with all the moving parts integrat-
ing into a mesmerizing whole.
Not having seen them, I have a
strong suspicion they would slay
in a live setting. The next time
the world wants to anoint a smash
folk-crossover act, I say why not
these guys?

— By Scott Lingley

Cahalen Morrison & Country Hammer

The Flower of Muscle Shoals (Free Dirt)



Transplanted
New Mexican
Morrison and
his Seat-
tle-based band
make spacious, simple, melodic
country in the classic mould, with
lots of sighing pedal steel and
winsome fiddle, loads of vocal
melody and a gentle sway about
it—despite the band's name, their
approach is rather nimble and nu-
anced. In classic form, the album
is jukebox-ready, with most tunes
clocking in at about three minutes.
Bakersfield-inspired songs such

as *Sorrow Lines the Highway of
Regret* sit cheek-by-jowl with
bluesier, acoustic numbers like
The Delta Divine and a winning
detour into Cajun territory on the
accordion-powered *San Luis*, but
all showcase Morrison's appeal-
ing, country-appropriate voice. It's
familiar enough that it probably
won't rock your world, but that's
not why you're here in the first
place now, is it?

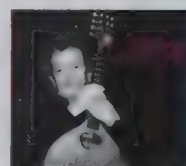
— By Scott Lingley

Andy Irvine

Abocurragh (Claddagh)

Andy Irvine & Rens van der Zalm

Parachilna (Independent)



These are not new releases, but
after having them thrust into my
hand at the 2014 Edmonton folk
fest, I felt it was my duty to make
sure our good readers were fully
informed about them.

Released in 2010, *Abocurragh*
was Irvine's first solo album in
over ten years. Donal Lunny, who
also plays guitar or bouzouki
throughout, produced it. Irvine's
clear and lilting vocals tell the

Edmonton Folk Music Festival



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ories in these mainly trad and original songs wonderfully accompanied by his dexterous mandola, buzouki and harmonica playing. This is a lovely collection of ballads, humorous songs and a few great instrumental passages. *Parachilna* is an album of Irish and Australian songs recorded live in July 2012, while camping in the Australian Outback. Rens van Zalm plays guitar, mandolin, fiddle and viola. One of the highlights is the opener *I Wish I Was Belfast Town*, a plaintive ballad of lost love. *He Fades Away* is a gut-wrenching Alistair Hulett song about a dying miner from the Blue Meston mines in Western Australia. *Come to the Bower* is a song written as an exhortation to Irish migrants to return home. This whole marvelous collection was recorded live in disused buildings on a laptop!

These two albums are truly the sound of a master at work.

— By Tim Readman

Jill Barber

Fool's Gold (Independent)



Jill Barber doesn't seem to pick up on trends so much as reconfigure them for her own purposes. When she turned to jazz and her own

version of the American songbook a number of years back she added a glittering and light touch to a genre often weighed down by tradition and expectation. She's still on the same kick with *Fool's Gold* but now Barber has started reconfiguring soul on songs such as the saxophone-heavy *Broken For Good*, undercutting the expected sweaty groove, instead offering a low-key, cool approximation of something The Shirelles might have tried in an alternate reality. Elsewhere she pivots between piano-led '50s pop with strings, jaunty touches of Dixieland horns (*Darlin' It Was You*), sweet ingenue cooing throughout. A fine follow-up to 2011's *Mischiefous Moon*.

— By Tom Murray

Dolly Parton

Blue Smoke (Sony)



It's pretty amazing how, over a five-decade career that's veered

from penning evergreen country classics into the schlockiest heart of the mainstream and back, Dolly Parton's profile as singer/songwriter of some integrity has remained intact. She's certainly put that reputation to good use in her post-hitmaking era, largely



Dolly Parton

dispensing with radio-friendly production and crossover appeal to put out albums rooted in the mountain music she was raised on. *Blue Smoke* splits the difference, polishing her cred when she sticks with her own compositions and sparkly acoustic arrangements on songs such as the title track, *Unlikely Angel*, and *From Here to the Moon*, a duet with Willie Nelson. Even her cover of Dylan's *Don't Think Twice* is good fun.

But Dolly can't entirely suppress her crowd-pleasing impulses and slips in stabs at lighter-waving country anthems (*Home, Try*), a thudding Bon Jovi cover, and a cheesy, nostalgia-mongering duet with Kenny Rogers. And somehow, despite its contrivances, the net impression is positive. Chalk another (half of) one up for Dolly's artistic integrity.

— By Scott Lingley

Natalie Merchant

Natalie Merchant (Nonesuch)



After a double album of British and American poetry about children set to music (2010's *Leave Your Sleep*) and another of traditional material, (2003's *The House Carpenter's Daughter*), Natalie Merchant gets back to her own material with the all-original set of songs on her self-titled second album for Nonesuch Records. It's an understated affair

that smartly depends on her vocal shadings over anything else, with muted orchestral accompaniment to the gentle *Maggie Said*, clarinet warbles snaking through the menacing floor toms of *Black Sheep*, the palest shadings of strings draped over *Giving Up Everything*. At times so immaculately produced that the music verges on aural wallpaper, there are still little instrumental pinpricks that nag at you on second and third listen, bringing Merchant's voice in focus, deepening the drama at the heart of these songs.

— By Tom Murray

Laurie Lewis & Kathy Kallick

Kathy and Laurie Sing the Songs of Vern and Ray

(Spruce and Maple Music)



Two longtime stalwarts of the California bluegrass scene come together

to celebrate two other stalwarts of the California bluegrass scene. Laurie Lewis has had a spotty recording career, with some stunning highlights, such as her *Who Will Watch the Homeplace*, and lots of stuff that doesn't work as well, if only because she is overthinking things, trying to make more of something than it can be. She's best when she stays closer to home, and even better in her collaborations with Kathy Kallick. Because of that, this release, very



Natalie Merchant

Music that moves body & soul

Peter Prince

ISLAND WAY

West coast breezy listening

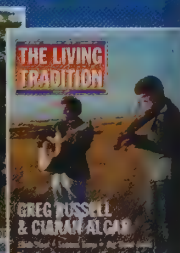
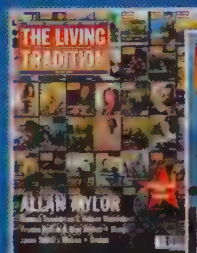
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Win a Copy of Martin Simpson's Vagrant Stanzas

Martin Simpson

From boy wonder to elder statesman, Martin Simpson's prowess with the acoustic guitar has earned him universal praise for the best part of the past 35 years from the likes of Steve Miller, Richard Thompson, and Jackson Browne. Brian Wilson of Beach Boys fame even called Simpson up one morning in Los Angeles as he played on the radio. Obviously, Wilson has a good ear. More than any other performer, Simpson has been nominated 26 times since the inception of the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards began in 2002. That's more than any other performer.

His musical interests are as broad as

his talents and range from gospel to acoustic blues. But what lies at the very heart of what he does is the traditional music of the British Isles. And he's in dazzling form on *Vagrant Stanzas*.

Topic Records has very kindly donated six copies for some lucky readers to win. To receive one, correctly answer the questions below and email them to penguineggs@shaw.ca. Put Martin Simpson as the subject.

And please, don't forget to include a mailing address and a proper contact name in order for us to forward your disc. Failure to do so will result in disqualification. Good luck.

Q 1: Name the song written by Cat Stevens that Martin recorded.

Q 2: What traditional Irish band plays on the album *Kind Letters*?

Q 3: Who did Martin write his celebratory song *Never Any Good* about?

Answers to the Bob Dylan 30th Anniversary Concert Celebration are: Q1: Just prior to the concert, Sinéad O'Connor had ripped up a

picture of Pope John Paul II on television
Q2: Robbie Robertson and Richard Manuel
Q3: Martin Carthy.

And the Winners are: Michael Heydon, ON; Marilyn Weir, NS; Skot Nelson, BC; Doug Birrell, AB; Janice Milne, MB.

ppily finds her at her best. Vern Williams and Ray Park are lesser known duo from the first generation of bluegrass, though large part brought bluegrass to California. Williams is thought as the father of California bluegrass, and his recordings and performances with Ray Park were, a time before iTunes, the entry point for many players who then went on to define the California scene, one that would give rise to Clarence White, Roland White, and Tony Rice, among others. This collection pays tribute in the purest sense, giving a tour of the songs and the arrangements that Vern and Ray made famous as well as standards that they interested, such as the Carter Family's *Clinch Mountain Home* and Stephen Foster's *Oh Susanna*. On tracks such as *To Hell with the Lord* and *Lewis and Kallick* capture the swagger of the music as well as the culture of the time when these songs were written. If you're a fan of both Lewis and Kallick, this is the album you've been waiting for—one that finds them together, applying themselves to the kind of material that they do best.

By Glen Herbert

Lynne Hanson

Mer of Sand (Independent)



Dark musings weaved through noir-folk, Appalachian-styled narratives aren't a new thing but done well they can be pretty damn special, when Ottawa's Lynne Hanson picks up with the ominous, pulsing track to her latest album. She doesn't move too far from that fatal position, driving narratives not through with hopelessness (*Colour My Summers Blue*), vengeance (*Good Intentions*) and despair (*Heaven and Hell*) in a passionate voice that might even hide an ache in the stoicism, you listen closely. Well worth picking out among the waves of this year's other indie-folk albums.

By Tom Murray

John Mann

The Waiting Room (Independent)



John Mann has spent a long time now turning his life into art. From the early days of *Spirit of the West* proudly proclaiming the benefits of the drunken crawl, of getting political, or coming off the road to just rest, all the while creating little masterpieces from Venetian and other memories. Then, just for a change, reinventing his art by exploring the thespian way of expression.

We've been lucky to have him, reassuring and reaffirming us of our humanity by chronicling the beauty and foibles of his. But as we all get older the party slows down, beauty tarnishes and things just start to break down, especially bodies.

As we reach a certain age we all get touched in one way or another by indications of mortality. One of the most sobering perhaps is cancer.

John has for the past few years experienced a brutal fight with his cancer and so far has survived. Not only survived but turned the experience into one of the most moving, courageous, articulate, and, dare I say it, entertaining pieces of work I have come across in a very long time.

He pulls no punches and tells a common story of rising to the occasion when necessary. From the discovery of *The Angry Sore* inside him to the taking of debili-



John Mann

tating drugs given him with kindness, John recognizes collective humanity at its best, in spite of the anger and frustration with this invasion of his body. Like most things in life, we can't do it alone.

Don't be afraid of the subject matter; the right music and the right words married simply and beautifully together, John Mann has given us a wonderful gift of here. I laughed, I cried, I marvel at his talent, and know my world, indeed, is a better place because of John Mann.

— By les siemienuk

Billy Joe Shaver

Long in the Tooth (Lightening Rod Records)



Billy Joe Shaver's first studio album in seven years takes a shot at

some of Nashville's stars. Featuring his buddy Willie Nelson, Shaver sneers through the opening track, *Hard to Be An Outlaw*:

"Some super stars nowadays get too far off the ground / Singing 'bout the backroads they never have been down / They go and call it country / but that ain't the way it sounds".

Nelson liked it so much he put *Outlaw* and *The Git Go* on his 2014 release, *Band of Brothers*.

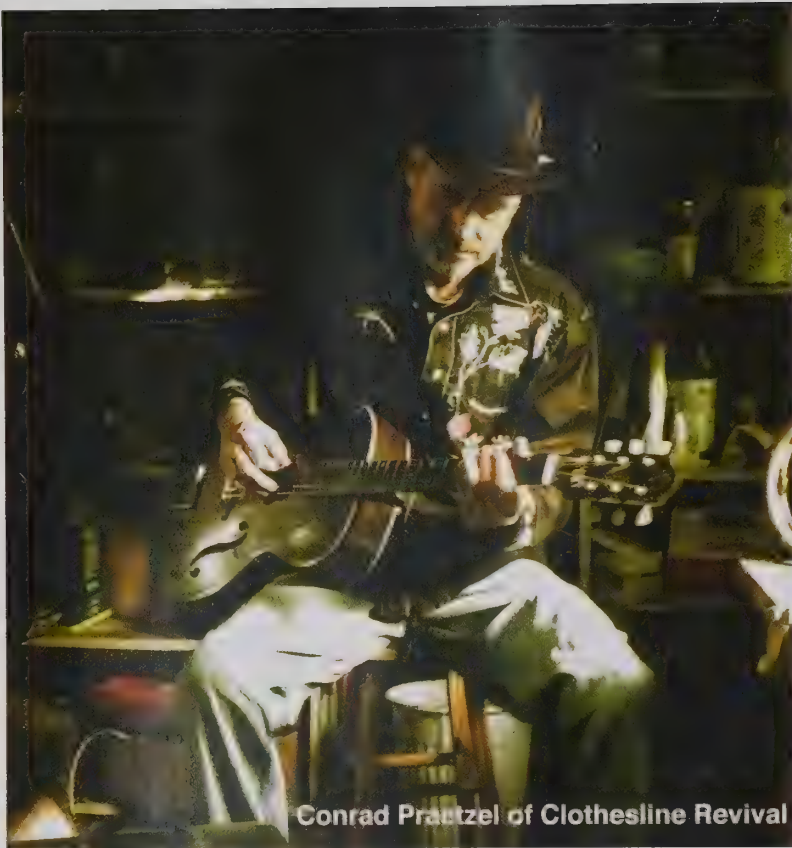
The title *Last Call for Alcohol* may sound as if belongs on a Nashville 'bro country' recording but Shaver's obvious bitterness over his lack of radio success puts a sharp edge on the lyric.

I'll Love You as Much as I Can is an old-timey waltz that should be featured at small-town weddings across the continent—if only people knew about it.

Long in the Tooth is an apt de-



Billy Joe Shaver



Conrad Praetzel of Clothesline Revival

scription for the veteran songwriter but the country rap arrangement of the title track won't be to everyone's taste. Shaver sounds

every bit of his 74 years but the searing vocals reflect the fire that still burns in his belly.

— By Ruth Blakely

Clothesline Revival

The Greatest Show on Mars (Paleo Music)



Aptly titled, the music of Clothesline Revival (a.k.a. Conrad Praetzel) is like nothing you've heard on this planet. He mines the old—field hollers and bits and pieces from Alan Lomax's field recordings, adding new instrumentation from banjo, mandolin, guitar, and even theremin and rock guitar to create an entirely unconventional smorgasbord of hybrid Americana, reworked into something remarkably warm, inventive and somewhat addictive.

Think of how Fat Possum lent a modern twist to hill country blues and twist it again, with mad scientist results—yet keep it painstakingly mixed and recorded with pristine results.

The dual acoustic guitars and slam-dunk percussion behind “March of the Cosmic Puppets” contrasts nicely with the opening

field recording of Bessie Jones (from '61), matched to hand claps, guitar, and what sounds like a muted calliope. *Steal Away* could be the devil child of Cap Beefheart and Hobart Smith and it's little wonder the band's a hit on Mars. Yet, the musical genius behind these hybrid compositions proves remarkably down-to-earth if not entirely satisfying.

Clothesline Revival provides an other-worldly answer to the seeking *And Now For Something Completely Different*—musical experimentation and exploration at its finest.

— By Eric G. Thom

Blue Moon Marquee

Lonesome Ghosts (Independent)

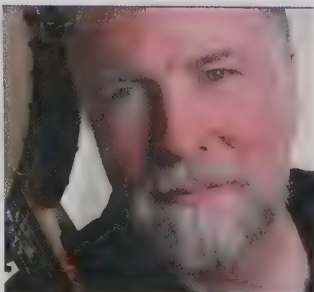


With their second release after 2012's *Stainless Steel Heart*, Blue

Moon Marquee return with *Lonesome Ghosts*. Tagged as Gypsy blues, A.W. (Alexander Wesley)



John McCutcheon



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rdinal and Jasmine Colette
 upt with eight progressive
 ginals and a cover by Western
 ing wild man Moon Mullican.
 pported by Mat Temple/Kenton
 ewen on drums, Simon Kend-
 Nathan Shubert on keyboards,
 d Cameron Wilson on violin,
 band's seemingly laid-back
 roach to Western swing and
 l-time country belies a deep
 e of both genres, borne out by
 passionate instrumentation and
 nized rhythms. Cardinal enjoys
 perfect voice for this mu-
 —expressive, slightly craggy,
 asionally overly Waitsian, and
 ked with personality, keeping
 mood playful as the band
 olodes, in subtle fashion, all
 ound him. The winsome title
 ck is bare bones—bass and
 ustic guitar—but it's another
 um highlight through its ability
 mine the past without becom-
 maudlin. It also manages to
 ke up a somewhat restrictive
 us on tradition. Short, sweet,
 d tempered by time, *Lonesome*
 osts should garner this band
 ne fitting attention.
 By Eric G. Thom

John Mayall

A Special Life (Forty Below Records)



Mayall's first
 release in five
 years, Britain's
 Godfather
 of the Blues

has never sounded better. He
 sounds revitalized on this, his
 58th release—surrounded by his
 hand-chosen young bucks who
 help him do what he's always
 done so well. His seminal Blues-
 breakers release of '66—a true
 touchstone of British blues, featur-
 ing a young Eric Clapton and John
 McVie, could've served as proper
 epitaph for anyone else but May-



all. He's always been driven and,
 as if living up to his own reputa-
 tion wasn't enough, he even found
 time to paint the cover art. Using
 the same band that helmed *Tough*,
 Mayall's latest discovery is Rocky
 Athas, a hard-edged Texan gui-
 tarist recommended by Mayall's
 last guitarist, Buddy Whittington.
 Chicago is well represented in the
 rhythm section of Jay Davenport
 (drums) and Greg Rzab (bass),
 produced by Eric Corne—whom
 Mayall met while guesting on
 another of his guitar alumni's
 graduates, Walter Trout.

As always, Mayall's star guitar-
 ists often carry the day and Athas
 shines admirably throughout but
 especially on Jimmy McCrack-
 lin's *I Just Got To Know* and the
 tougher-sounding *Like A Fool*, two
 of the disc's strongest tracks.

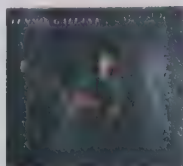
From the autobiographical title
 track to a spirited cover of Eddie
 Taylor's *Big Town Playboy* with
 its strong harmonica intro, Mayall
 proves he is, at 81, far from living
 in the past tense, sounding better
 than he has in years.

A special life, indeed.

— By Eric G. Thom

Lennie Gallant

Live Acoustic at the Carleton (Independent)



The warmth
 and immediacy
 of a perfor-
 mance by Len-
 nie Gallant is

nicely captured in this acoustic al-
 bum that does a fine job of show-
 ing why the East Coast singer/
 songwriter is such a fan favourite.
 He's got a young band with him,
 including two Gallant nephews
 (Jeremy on keyboard, Jonathan on
 cajon), and the exuberance with
 which they play lends old classics
 like The Band's *Still Playing and*
Tell Me a Ghost Story new life.
 There are a few new songs tagged
 on, such as *Has Anybody Seen*
My Skates and *God's Reply*, but
 mostly classics from the Gallant
 songbook. A good introduction for
 anyone not familiar with his un-
 derstated, well-crafted music, and
 a fine souvenir for longtime fans.

— By Tom Murray

Skipinnish

Western Ocean (Skipinnish Records)



More
 big-hearted
 Scottish/World
 music from
 Skipinnish,

with the emphasis on the Scottish
 Highlands. The Nelson Mandela
 Set kicks things off and acts as
 statement if intent for the rest of
 the proceedings. Rousing pipes,
 accordion and fiddle swirl and soar
 as guitar, piano, bass and thudding
 drums drive it all along. Songwri-
 ters Angus MacPhail and Robert
 Robertson specializing in songs
 with big sing-along choruses in
 Scots Gaelic and English, which
 Robertson sings with considerable
 verve. *Aisling Cuimhn'*, is a rare
 moment of quiet contemplation
 with additional sweet vocals from
 Rachel Walker. There's also a
 cover version of *About You Now*
 by the Sugababes, which seems a
 little out of place, but is likely to
 be a popular live favourite. This
 is confident CD by a band who
 knows how to have fun and make
 sure their audience does too.

— By Tim Readman

Duncan Chisholm

Live at Celtic Connections (Copperfish Records)



This album is
 the realization
 of a concept
 that has fuelled
 a trilogy of

CDs celebrating the natural beauty
 of Strathglass in the Scottish
 Highlands, where Chisholm's
 dad's family has lived for 700
 years. This body of work evolved
 into *The Strathglass Suite*, which
 received its premiere performance
 at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and
 Museum in Glasgow during Scot-
 land's renowned Celtic arts festi-
 val. Here it is, perfectly captured
 for posterity. The suite features
 the superb fiddling of Chisholm,
 supported by a crack band of super
 Scots players, further aided and
 abetted by a mighty string and
 brass ensemble. There are tranquil
 airs, rousing tunes, and moments
 of orchestral majesty. Duncan
 has come a long way from his



time with folk-rockers Wolfstone. *Live at Celtic Connections* marks his arrival as a composer and interpreter of fine traditionally based music with few peers. Lush, elegant, and deeply evocative; this is music built to last.

— By Tim Readman

Jon & Roy

By My Side (Independent)



harmonica player Jon Middleton

Jon & Roy, if you don't already know, are songwriter, guitarist, and

and drummer/percussionist Roy Vizer. This Victoria, BC, duo have had success placing their songs on MTV and HBO, as well as ads for Scotiabank and Telus and have appeared on Stuart McLean's *The Vinyl Cafe* CBC show. They have four previous discs: *Sittin' Back* (2005), *Another Noon* (2008), *Homes* (2010), and *Let It Go* (2012). This latest showcases more of the laid-back, music-at-its-most-basic vibes that have made them popular both live and on recordings. Middleton has a distinctive, muted, cloudy, wavering voice that can up the ante to a throaty blues shout when necessary.

Their stuff has a hypnotic, trance-like effect with the rhythmic strumming and percussion with flourishes of other instruments as guests. Probably the best tracks on this recording are *Where'd My Life Go*, *Every Night* with its nice harmonica solo, and *Take Me By Surprise*, which resolves into a clarinet melody

played by guest Joe Hatherill. Pleasant, appealing sounds.

— By Barry Hammond

Willie Watson

Folk Singer, Vol. 1 (Acony Records)



The jacket design of the album is from a 1963 camp

Watson's guitar, pipe, and the design recalls a 1960s max field recording from the period. Gutsy? It absolutely is. Watson comes dangerously close—and doesn't think consciously so—to becoming a caricature. His persona is singing cowboy, a rambler this with the dust of America.

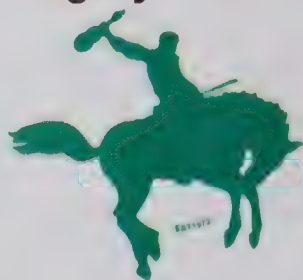
But he's playing with that idiosyncrasy too. It's not the '60s, and it's not the west or the dust bowl, and that's his point. Even that term "folksinger", in the folk revival period, that was apparently a term that people could use simply, such as "car mechanic" or "policeworker". It meant what it said. And then it changed. The term



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ksinger became earnest, and
en it became laughable. That
atson uses it here brings up all
the contradictions of the period
d his desire to deal with them
ad on.
t works because Watson is so
nvincing, so deft and compel-
g as a performer, that at his best
is nothing short of mesmer-
ng. He's in that film, *Another*
y *Another Time*, and just as
re entranced watching him bob
and down through a perfor-
nce of *Midnight Special* the
er performers with him, Gillian
elch and David Rawlings, look
e kids at a fun fair, smiling with
shear joy of being involved in
s thing.

Vatson's album begins with
Midnight Special, in a more
trained version. He then goes
to present songs in as sparse
resentation as you'd expect to
at a Greenwich Village coffee
ase just prior to the folk boom:
e voice, a strained vocal, a ban-
or a guitar for accompaniment.
re as bare can be. His voice
ies from field holler to intro-
ction, and all of it works in
way that Pete Seeger worked:
e man, a song, and an unwav-
ng confidence in an ability to
iver a message about something
ortant.

By Glen Herbert

The Once

artures (Nettwerk)

Newfound-
land's The
Once seem
determined to
fashion island
music after their own image, shun-
g Celtic tinges and kitchen-par-
tracousness for something
re thoughtful and distinctive.
aldine Hollett's soaring voice
he core of the band's appeal, a
iant beam of melody at the cen-
of the arrangements. Multi-in-
strumentalists/harmonists Phil
urchill and Andrew Dale round
the trio, but *Departures* calls
guest horns, strings, rhythm
tions, a choir, even a musical
v, to elaborate the approach and



The Once

raise things from scant acoustic
treatments up to a rockin' pitch on
songs such as *Fool for You*. But
it's their transformation of Ron
Hynes's *Sonny's Dreams* into a
glorious hymn featuring the band's
rich harmonies and not much else
that hints at their power as a live
act. The Once soon head out on a
world tour with Passenger, so you
may get to bear witness yourself
before too long.

— By Scott Lingley

Raoul and The Big Time

Hollywood Blvd (Big Time Records)



Raoul
Bhaneja has
always injected
intelligence
into his blues
knowing that talent, alone, doesn't
necessarily move the bar forward.
In this, his fifth release, he also
injects some big-time guests into
his smart blend of solid originals
and tasty covers, clearly putting
his money where his mouth is.
His accomplished Big Time band,
comprised of a *Who's Who* of first-
call Toronto locals, ably tackle
four tracks with special guests
while three others are assaulted by
Bhaneja fronting Rick Holmstrom,
Jeff Turmes, Stephen Hodges, and
Donny Gerrard. Five additional

tracks are served up by a third
band comprised of Junior Watson,
Fred Kaplan, Larry Taylor, and
Richard Innes.

Like a kid in candy shop, Bhane-
ja—equal parts actor and musi-
cian—tears through this collection
of West Coast/Chicago blues,
swing jazz and more, matching his
quality songwriting to the likes of
Toussaint, Bobby Bland, and Pops
Staples and scoring quite nicely in
the transaction.

On occasion, Bhaneja overtaxes
his vocals (*High Roller*, *Tired*) and
the addition of an ill-fitting blue-
grass ballad simply doesn't fit its
surroundings yet, with such treats
as the searing Bhaneja/Salgado
harp duel of *Curtis Charm* or the
inspired cover of Allen Toussaint's
Get Out of My Life Woman with
Rusty Zinn and a full horn section
more than make up for any short-
comings. A solid release—and
then some.

— By Eric G. Thom

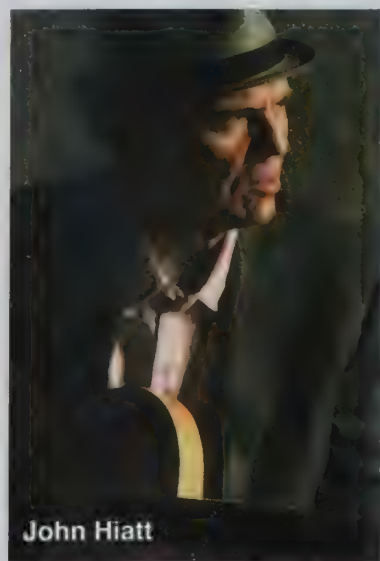
John Hiatt

Terms of My Surrender (New West)



Edging past
60 might have
given Hiatt a
starker view of
mortality but
truth is that he's always been an
old guy in a young man's body,

even back when he was trying
to cut Elvis Costello at his own
game. That he's now got the driv-
er's licence to back up lyrics such
as "*Leaves are fallin', winter's on
my mind*" (*Here To Stay*) doesn't
mean that he's any more sage on
the topic, though his voice has
settled into a fitting croak for
his acoustic folk-blues reveries.
Traditionally more a songwriter
than a singer, handicapped com-
mercially by a wry, soft-sting wit
that likely still befuddles Nashville
five decades on, he makes records
for a small coterie of fans, or other
songwriters, or hell, maybe just
himself. Doesn't matter; this one
is rawer than the last few, full
of desperate cries (*Come Back*)



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ome), contemplation (*Long Time* *omin'*'), sly declarations of love (*Marlene*). It's a modest record, e many of his others, but Hiatt's rning ambition as a song crafter ould never be confused with that odesty; these tunes have depth. - By Tom Murray

Trolska Polska

SS (Independent)



From the land of Denmark comes Trolska Polska, a group of seven musicians whose goal is "to explore and celebrate the intriguing world [Danish] myth [such as trolls, gnomes, pixies, etc.] through troll-like fiddle tunes and mesmerizing acoustic ambiance". In 2005, the resulting album, features an hour's worth of 15 instrumental tunes created to capture this myth-landscape.

These are not strictly fiddle tunes, in the traditional sense. The compositions include a mix of fiddle, flute, mandolin, guitar, percussion, cello, and a bit of singing. Some of the tunes are the foot-tapping variety while others create brash, eerie, lyrical, and dreamy soundscapes, laden, you use your imagination, with these creatures of myth. Beware, there be trolls.

- By Gene Wilburn

Rueben and The Dark

General Sky (Arts and Crafts)



So this is the debut album for Calgary's Rueben Bullock and his band

the Dark. Well, not for Calgary. We've known about them for a while now and mostly we've wondered what took so long for a major player like Arts and Crafts to get on board. We knew Rueben was destined for bigger things. And it's a good 'un. Rueben is a pretty talented songwriter and he aptly named The Dark deliver sound that seems to have been pulled from a brooding well of Turkish, gothish gospel. You know



Oliver Swain & Glenna Garramone: Tower of Song

that southern alt-folk sound that convinces you there are preachers peeking out, watching your every move from behind giant, overgrown trees.

Yet as dark as Rueben's writing is, it's also uplifting with a noticeable ray of hope in every song. The band sings and plays like a band should and does the material justice and then some. Lending haunting banjo or call-and-response vocals when needed, then kicking up the energy and volume to perfection like in the anthemic *Like a Rolling Stone*. Couldn't get that song outta' my head—it's great.

If there is any misstep in the record, the title track instrumental didn't seem to fit where it was placed and suffered by comparison to the rest of the material. All in all, moody with lovely harmonies and songs that haunt for days after, Rueben and The Dark have made a fine debut.

- By les siemieniuk

Tower of Song

In City and in Forest (Independent)



When I was a kid, it was OK to be an interpreter of song. There was a Brill building that cranked out great tunes so artists had the best to choose from and didn't have to worry about writing songs—a

great skill which is hard to come by. Then along came Bob Dylan and The Beatles and the whole world changed—you had to write your own songs and were discouraged from being an interpreter or, God forbid, a "cover" artist.

I think we should go back to a more balanced world and applaud the performers who recognize that other songwriters are as good as they are and there is no harm in covering great songs written by others.

All that said, Victoria's Oliver Swain (The Bills, Scrub MacDuck) has teamed with Glenna Garramone under the name Tower of Song to release a compilation of, yes, Leonard Cohen songs. Well, you might as well choose from the best songs out there, but then again you better put your own stamp on them and deliver the goods.

Oliver and Glenna do. It's a lovely album. Thanks for thinking of the idea and being strong enough to carry it off with such aplomb.

- By les siemieniuk

Pascal Gemme & Mario Loiselle

Violon du Québec (Musique du Monde/Music from the World) (Buda Records)

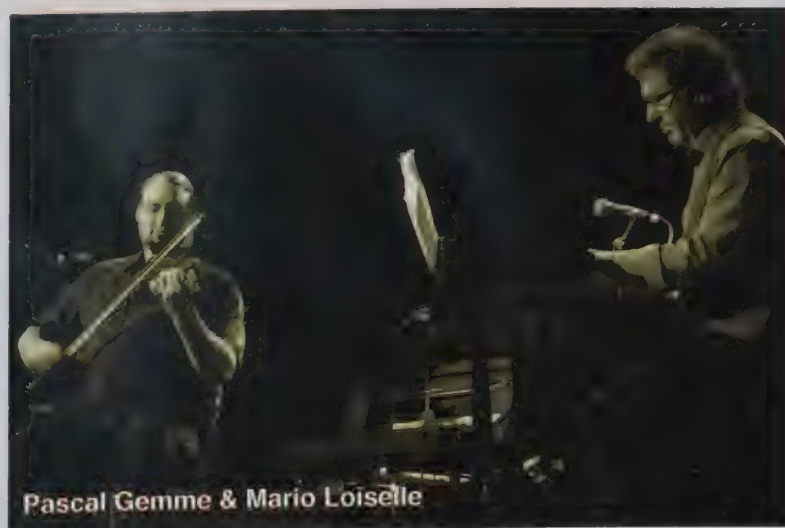


The quintessence of traditional Canadian folk music could

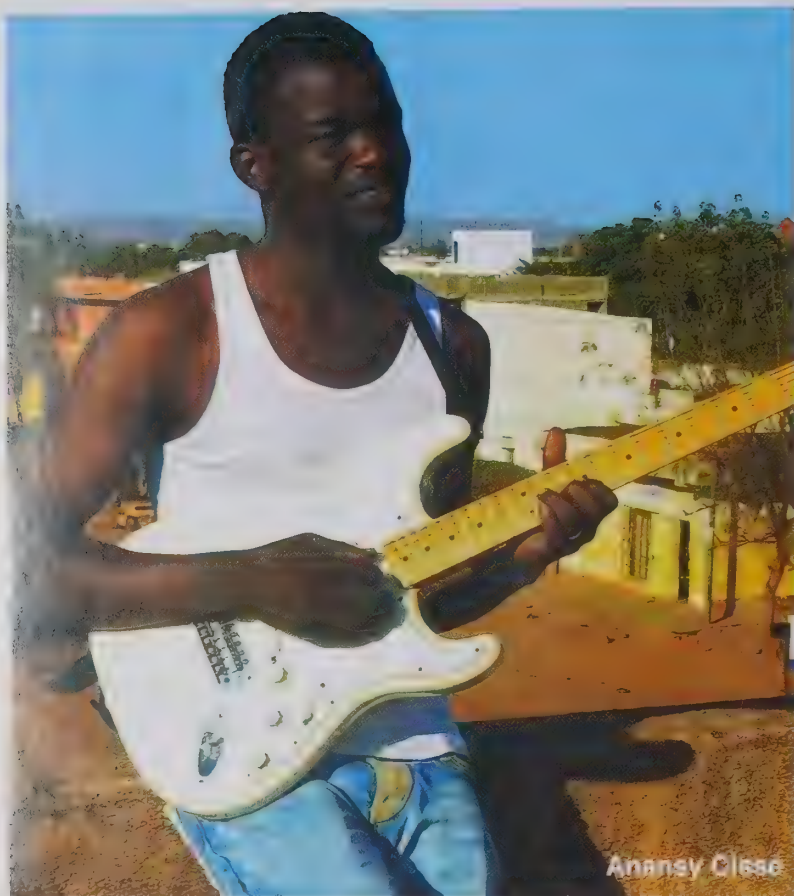
be said to be found in the popular fiddle tunes of the Maritimes and Quebec. The currents and eddies of historic Scots, Irish, English, and French music swirled together to create New World sounds and styles that are unique and endearing to this day.

You won't find a finer example of this than in the 16 tunes on *Violon du Québec* by Pascal Gemme (violin) and Mario Loiselle (piano). Gemme is a master fiddler with a delivery that adds additional nuances to the tunes during every repeated section. Loiselle sets the pace and the background. The result is an outstanding Canadian fiddle album laced with reels, a bit of foot tapping, an occasional bit of vocal, and an obvious delight in the traditional tunes of Quebec. If you collect fiddle music, this album is a must.

The extensive liner booklet tells the history of each piece and even which elder fiddler Gemme learned it from. In the places



Pascal Gemme & Mario Loiselle



where he has deviated from the original tune, he has noted both passages with music notes to show the differences. Rarely are liner notes this good or this educational.

— By Gene Wilburn

Anansy Cissé

Mali Overdrive (Riverboat/World Music Network)



Songwriter and guitarist Anansy Cissé, of Mali, was forced to move

south of Mali when militant Muslims, opposed to the performance of music, took over his home area. Fortunately for us, he moved to

a friendlier environment and was talked into recording a solo album of the songs he had been giving away freely to friends—and we're all the richer for it. World music fans will find a great deal to like in the 10 songs of peace and harmony on *Mali Overdrive*.

Cissé's fine vocals in his native language and his distorted electric guitar riffs accompanying the songs are melded with bass guitar and native instruments such as the ngoni, soku, and calabash. The result is a fresh fusion of sounds that work beautifully within their intricate syncopated African rhythms. You may not understand

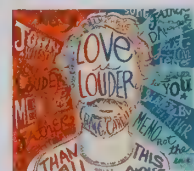
the words to *Baala*, *Fati Ka*, *Ago-bene*, or *Gomni* but you'll grok the message. The album is musically rich and rewarding.

— By Gene Wilburn

Craig Cardiff

Love is Louder (Than All This Noise)

(Independent)



Reviewing a collection of music that arrives in the mail from Penguin Eggs headquarters is usually a straight forward proposition. You put on the CD and listen and then react to it. Every once in a while a performer throws a curve at you. Like Joel Plaskett did with a three-CD package a few years ago. That's not the norm. And now Ontario's Craig Cardiff delivers a new sophisticated and engaging curve ball of an album as well. It takes more work than a usual listen but is well worth the effort.

It's a two-CD package. CD1 is discreetly labelled louder and has nine songs. CD2 is labelled gentler with 12 songs (seven of which appear on the louder side). I think you get the picture: yes louder is with a great band (and actually not that loud), gentler is more folkly and acoustic, echoing Craig's earlier Juno-nominated works. So you get 14 great new songs, seven of which come in two different versions.

It's a marvellous record that shows there are many and various ways to present good songs and, different arrangements bring out

different colours and meaning. Each song that is dually recorded lives a separate and meaningful life in both recorded versions. It never gets boring and is a great listen. Good on ya, Craig. Keep coming

— By les siemieniuk

Ash and Bloom

Let the Storm Come (Independent)



In my reviews I try not to compare performers to previous ones because most of the time when you hear it said that someone sounds like Tom Waits, somehow that's not a great positive because Tom Waits got there first.

Well, I've been around long enough now to have heard a lot of artists that remind me of other performers—but never so immediately, so boldly as from the first guitar notes of *Let the Storm Come* than to the first entry of their lovely, lovely voices: wow, Si and Garfunkel.

So in all the best senses of the comparison—Matt McKenna and James Bloemendal are Ash and Bloom and they belong singing together. It's a lovely ride, this album. *Heaven is a Ghost Town* hit me particularly well as did *Town (Hamilton)* but it's all good here—the love, the optimism, cynicism as well as *The Endless Pursuit of Cool*, all written well and performed even better.

No, they're not Simon and Garfunkel but as Ash and Bloom

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commend a close listen because *Let the Storm Come* ended I smiling and thought, 'You now, I should listen to those guys again—both of them. —By les siemieniuk

Easton Stagger Phillips

Resolution Road (RebelTone Records)

Starting a band with one member from Nashville, TN, one from Lethbridge, AB, and one from Anchorage, AK, might sound a bit daunting. In fact, when Tim Easton (Nashville), Jeremy Stagger (Lethbridge), and Ian Phillips (Anchorage) first got together in a cabin in Alaska they weren't actually intending to start a band, just to record some tracks together.

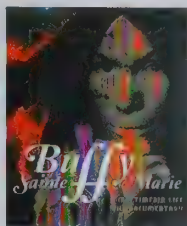
The result was 2008's *One For the Ditch*, which they described as "acoustic front porch stomp." There was a follow-up tour. The idea of working together again seemed appealing but solo and individual projects intervened and only now have they released their sophomore project, which is a much more produced and sophisticated affair. They definitely sound like a band and now, somewhat along the lines of The Jayhawks or Traveler Wilburys, with the emphasis on melodic harmonies and catchy, guitar-driven songs. The lack of writing credits on the disc forces the listener to deal with them as a unit, and a tight unit they are. There's not much in the way of liner notes here, just great songs played well: *Those Good Times (LMSU)*, *Life Of Crime*, *So Much In Tune*, *Wildflowers*, *Begin*, and *Baby Come Home* could all be hits if given the proper radio support, and the other tracks are close behind. The laid-back drumming by Nick Stecz on most tracks but two of the tracks adds the textured, fluid, rapid-bass-pedal feel of rock to country/folk roots. No replacement, Kyle Harmon, on those two cuts is no slouch either. —By Barry Hammond

DVDs

Buffy Sainte-Marie

A Multimedia Life: The Documentary DVD

(True North Records)



When this critic reviewed Blair Stonechild's biography of Buffy Sainte-Marie,

It's My Way, for Penguin Eggs in the spring of 2013, I said it was a pioneering book and I hoped it was just the beginning of more attention being focused on this ground-breaking artist. Now True North Records has engaged Gilles Paquin, John Bessai, and director Joan Prowse to produce a documentary film worthy of the subject.

With help from distinguished interviewees such as Joni Mitchell, Robbie Robertson, Randy Bachman, John Kay, Bill Cosby, Floyd (Redcrow) Westerman, and Blair Stonechild himself, the film-makers have done just that. Prowse captures not only the atmosphere of her beginning in the 1960s through judicious use of period footage but, like the book, encompasses all the wide aspects of an artist who was always ahead of her time. There is also good footage of Sainte-Marie performing and speaking for herself in all

stages of her career with insightful comments by all concerned. The editing is brisk and tight. A lot of information is packed into the 68-minute running time because it's not just the portrait of a recording artist and songwriter but a visual artist, educator, ambassador, and activist as well—and they manage to convey it all. There's certainly a need for a more in-depth study but, as a fine introduction and overview, this fits the bill perfectly.

— By Barry Hammond

Various Artists

Snowbird: The Songs Of Gene MacLellan

DVD (True North)



Gene MacLellan (1938-1995) was a noted Canadian songwriter and performer who was a regular guest on the television shows *Don Messer's Jubilee* and *Singalong Jubilee*. Probably best known for penning *Snowbird* for Anne Murray and *Put Your Hand in The Hand* for Ocean in the early 1970s, MacLellan was a long-time resident of Prince Edward Island. Filmed in the picturesque Charlottetown Zion Presbyterian Church, where his funeral was held almost two decades earlier, this concert is a tribute to the songwriter by musical friends and family.

Led by his youngest daughter,



Catherine MacLellan, herself a celebrated songwriter and performer with five CDs and numerous awards to her credit, performing guests include Lennie Gallant, Ron Hynes, Meaghan Blanchard, and Dennis Ellsworth & Haunted Hearts. Moya Walsh directs with a sure hand, capturing all the warmth and emotion of both the performers and the audience, who are all clearly moved.

Catherine MacLellan's lovely rendition of *Snowbird* is the DVD's highlight but some of the other musical moments are gorgeous, too. The concert and DVD are a fitting tribute to the man who wrote two of the first songs to be inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame.

— By Barry Hammond



Buffy Sainte-Marie

Après une absence de près de 20 ans, ce trio culte novateur revient en force avec un nouvel enregistrement classique.

– Par Yves Bernard



Le bruit court dans la ville

Il y a presque deux décennies, un disque a marqué l'histoire du trad québécois: *Le bruit court dans la ville*, signé par André Marchand, Lisa Ornstein et Normand Miron: une splendide création qui offrait une musique simple et dépouillée, mais dont l'interprétation était empreinte de virtuosité et de beaucoup de sensibilité dans le swing. En plus, le disque portait les profondeurs d'une histoire qui passe de Lanaudière à l'Acadie et du Québec à Lowell au Massachusetts. Aujourd'hui, *Le Bruit court dans la ville* est aussi le nom de ce trio qui est devenu un culte dans le milieu, en apparaissant et disparaissant comme bon lui semble. Depuis l'an dernier, il est revenu en force et au début de l'été, il a fait paraître *Les vents qui ventent*, une production qui s'insère en parfaite continuité avec le premier disque.

Le nom du trio vient de la pièce *Dans les prisons de Nantes*. « C'est toujours difficile de trouver un nom », raconte Normand Miron. « On ne sortait pas souvent et on s'est dit que quand on va sortir, les gens vont dire: « Le bruit court dans la ville ». Ça donnait un ton un peu secret ». Le disque est lancé en 1996-1997, mais le groupe ne se produit pas trop souvent. À un moment, Lisa déménage sur la côte ouest américaine pour élever ses enfants. Pendant ce temps, Normand et André continuent de faire de la musique ensemble. Ils avaient lancé un disque avec Les Frères Labri, ils ont poursuivi dans les Charbonniers l'Enfer, fameux groupe de bouches et de pieds.

Et pourquoi ce retour depuis l'an dernier? «

On a tous des familles, mais les enfants sont rendus plus grands, ce qui nous rend plus disponibles », répond Normand. André et Lisa voulaient faire un disque. Depuis le temps qu'on est dans le milieu, il nous reste tous des petits trésors cachés. On amis ça ensemble et on a concocté le disque ».

Le vent qui ventent est dans la lignée du premier disque, mais avec plus de richesse dans l'interprétation. Des reels bien texturés, de la turlutte harmonisée, un 6/8 qui précède une polka, quelques airs irlandais et des chansons de maris trompés et d'amante au pouvoirs surnaturels. Une est plus drôle, parle des députés, et une autre porte sur l'exil. On chante à répondre tout simplement. C'est classiquement folk, très mélodieux, lanaudois, québécois et acadien, à travers les âges.

Normand résume ce que représente pour lui ce trio : « Moi, c'est quelque chose que j'aime beaucoup pour plusieurs raisons. André est un vieux comparse. La définition d'un ami, c'est quelqu'un qu'on connaît, mais qu'on aime bien quand même. André correspond à ça. Et la musique, André pis moi, on entend ça pareil et on voit ça pareil. Quant à Lisa, ce qu'elle apporte, ce qui est rafraîchissant, c'est son côté américain, son côté musique d'ici, mais avec un traitement d'ailleurs ».

Lisa Ornstein possède une grande dextérité au niveau du jeu d'archet et des fioritures. Elle peut aussi faire glisser le violon dans la mélodie,

larmoyer sous la plainte, attaquer des phrases répétitives et sonner à l'ancienne. Normand lui trouve également plusieurs qualités : « C'est une grande musicienne dans tous les sens, l'harmonie autant que dans le rythme. Elle accorde son violon de quatre ou cinq manières différentes. Elle est traditionnelle, mais je suis sûr qu'elle a des choses à elle. Je n'ai pas entendu beaucoup de monde avoir ce son-là ». Dans le répertoire du groupe, elle apporte des mélodies, des arrangements ou des contre-chants sur des chansons que leur proposent ses deux collègues.

Pour ce projet, Normand aime beaucoup le mode mineur des chansons, le caractère plutôt triste, mélancolique, au rythme un peu moins endiable : « Il n'y a pas de pièces de ma famille dans ce nouveau disque. On en a ramassé ici et là dans des recueils et aux archives. Des fois les textes m'intéressent, mais moins la mélodie, alors je le recompose. Dans d'autres cas, je n'aime pas le texte, alors je prends le refrain et je l'arrange à ma manière. Je ne suis pas trop puriste. Je suis comme Jean-Paul Guimond, j'arrange ça quand ça fait pas mon affaire. André, lui, il est plus fidèle aux pièces qu'il trouve aux archives ».

André Marchand est un chanteur à la voix plus grave et son jeu de guitare lui a valu la grande reconnaissance. En entrevue l'an dernier, Lisa avait expliqué pourquoi : « Il a développé un jeu reconnaissable. Je dirais que c'est dans son choix d'accords et dans la vibration des

Ils injectent le son caractéristique des grands de la guitare africaine dans la musique traditionnelle du Québec et la Nouvelle-Écosse.

— Par Jason Schneider.

— Traduit par Veronique G.-Allard

Les jeunes squeegies ou les extra-terrestres, autant de sujets abordés dans les chansons de Bette & Wallet, un duo folk résolument moderne. Tout en s'appuyant lourdement sur les gigues et les reels qu'on entend dans les campagnes de la Nouvelle-Écosse et du Québec rural depuis des siècles, Mary Beth Carty et Gabriel Ouellette réussissent à y ajouter une sensibilité lyrique contemporaine, devenant ainsi un des duos de musiciens les plus uniques du circuit folk nord-américain et européen d'aujourd'hui.

Électrique, le dernier album de Bette & Wallet, amène leur son encore plus loin. Ouellette impressionne par ses prouesses techniques à la guitare électrique tout au long de l'album, tandis que Carty montre sa connaissance approfondie des styles tradi-

tionnels, irlandais, cajun et klezmer. Il faut dire que les deux artistes perfectionnent ce délicieux gombo musical depuis leur première rencontre dans un pub irlandais en 2005. Leur premier album est un bel exemple d'un produit fait maison, incluant l'image sur la pochette. Sorti en 2008, *Voci...* leur a valu des nominations au ECMA et au Prix de musique folk canadienne. Au cours des années qui ont suivi, Bette & Wallet ont participé à de nombreux festivals de musique traditionnelle importants, au Canada et en Europe, tout en jouant dans les bars, séduisant la jeunesse avec leur approche non conformiste.

La mise à l'épreuve de la perception définie de la musique traditionnelle est le principe directeur du duo depuis le début, affirme Ouellette, et les quatre années qu'a

des. C'est aussi au niveau du rythme qu'il ène dans la musique. Il a une oreille fine et e façon de ne pas alourdir la mélodie, et il ne uvre pas la voix». Dans une autre entrevue, rmand renchérit : « Je le trouve génial parce 'il nous apporte toujours un complément ccompagnement».

De son côté, Normand est tombé dedans avec famille du côté des Gravel qui ont inspiré Bottine souriante dans ses débuts. «C'est un turel, qui a du plaisir à jouer et qui com- unique bien ses idées. Il a une spontanéité. st comme un grand ami avec qui on reprend iours la conversation. En jouant avec lui, il y oujours de nouvelles choses à découvrir». e Bruit court dans la ville a annoncé des upes comme Genticorum, le Vent du nord plusieurs autres qui rayonnent actuellement. mment expliquer cela? Normand y va de son plication. « Je pense que pour notre généra- n, il y a eu d'abord le Rêve du Diable et la ttine. Ils prenaient des chansons, trouvaient la musique et mettaient ça ensemble. C'était uveau. Avant ça, on chantait, puis après, jouait un morceau de musique. Puis nous, and on est arrivé, les gens se sont aperçu on n'avait pas besoin d'être quatorze sur scène ur que ça marche. Je crois que ça peut avoir luencé la formation de trios et de plus petits upes».



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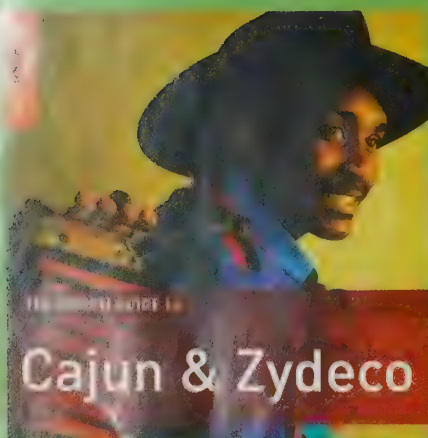
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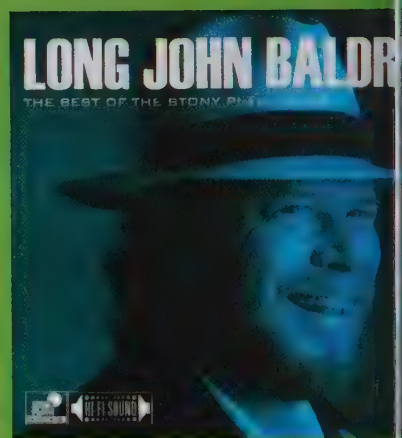
– Holger Petersen, CBC Radio (*Saturday Night Blues*)



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cessité la création d'*Électrique* n'ont pas fait exception. « Nous avons choisi le thème de l'album dès le début », a-t-il expliqué au téléphone de son domicile à Portneuf, Québec. Nous voulions aborder des thèmes politiques et critiques, en plus d'approfondir notre exploration des légendes urbaines. Nous avons rencontré toutes sortes de gens quand nous étions en tournée, "du monde bizarre" comme certains les appellent, et nous avons eu des conversations inoubliables après les spectacles. C'est une grande source d'inspiration pour notre nouvel album. »

Avoir des idées et créer de nouvelles chansons n'ont jamais été un problème pour le duo. C'est plutôt les responsabilités auxquelles ils devaient faire face en tant que musiciens à temps plein qui les ont presque fait tomber de leur monture en 2010, après le succès de leur premier album. Selon Ouellette, le fait qu'ils n'ont pu s'éloigner de la pression croissante exercée sur eux les a énormément aidés à explorer de nouvelles idées.

« Nous avons mis ce projet sur la glace pendant un certain temps parce que nous avons besoin de temps pour nous-mêmes », explique-t-il. « Nous habitions tous les deux en Nouvelle-Écosse, et j'ai décidé de revenir à Québec. J'ai complètement cessé de jouer de la musique pendant un bout. Mary Beth a repris son projet solo [Mary Beth de Scène], et il m'a fallu quelques mois pour recommencer à seulement jammer avec des gens. Mais des temps en temps, j'allais sur mon ordinateur et j'essayais ce que nous avions fait à date pour *Électrique*, jusqu'à ce que nous réalisions que c'était trop bon et que nous ne pouvions pas laisser tomber. »

Comme nous l'avons dit plus haut, le jeu de guitare de Ouellette constitue l'élément le plus important du nouvel album. Bien qu'il ait passé beaucoup de temps à jouer dans des groupes de rock, Ouellette était déjà complètement dévoué à la musique au moment de la création du duo Bette & Gabriel. Mais le fait de se remettre à la guitare électrique a contribué à rallumer le feu de sa passion pour la musique. Son jeu sur *Électrique* nous fait souvent penser aux grands guitaristes africains tels qu'Ali Farka Touré. Étonnamment, Ouellette avoue qu'il n'avait pas conscience d'avoir adopté cette approche au départ.

J'ai souvent entendu de la guitare électrique africaine jouer à la radio en Nouvelle-Écosse, mais je n'avais jamais réalisé à quel point cela m'avait influencé avant que certaines personnes commencent à me le faire remarquer », commente-t-il. « En fait, dans ma jeunesse, j'essayais de jouer de la guitare électrique comme si c'était un banjo, un peu dans le style de Richard Thompson. Mais c'était très dur, et

j'ai vraiment fait beaucoup d'efforts pour respecter les mélodies traditionnelles et y injecter de vraies émotions. Parfois, je trouve que la musique traditionnelle est jouée beaucoup trop vite, et que toute l'émotion disparaît quand on l'approche de cette manière. Oui, je pense que tous les efforts que j'ai faits ont porté fruit. Je me suis beaucoup amélioré en tant que guitariste. Maintenant quand je joue du banjo, ça me semble tellement facile. »

Ouellette ajoute que leur lien avec la musique folklorique traditionnelle s'est formé en grande partie à cause de leur lieu de naissance; Mary Beth Carty est née à Antigonish, Nouvelle-Écosse, et Gabriel Ouellette habite à Portneuf. Ces deux endroits ont été des lieux d'échange importants entre les musiciens québécois et irlandais, où les idées circulaient librement. Alan Lomax, un collecteur de chansons folkloriques, est une autre grande source d'inspiration pour Ouellette. Bien qu'il ne soit pas allé aussi loin que Lomax, Ouellette a tout fait pour absorber les subtilités de la musique de sa région natale.

« Je me suis intéressé à l'art populaire quand j'étais à l'Université. C'est qui m'a amené vers la musique », relate-t-il. « J'ai étudié les images d'un vieux recueil de chansons pour un cours; la plupart montraient des archétypes québécois comme des bûcherons ou des images du genre. Cela m'a amené à découvrir les grands maîtres du violon québécois. Encore maintenant, même après des années d'écoute, la complexité et la profondeur de certains enregistrements continuent de m'étonner. C'est la raison pour laquelle j'ai tant de respect pour cette musique. »

En même temps, Gabriel et Mary Beth sont tous deux conscients de l'importance d'avoir du plaisir. La chanson la plus étrange sur *Électrique* est sans doute « *Aliens Are Nice* », née d'une discussion avec leur public après un spectacle. Il n'y a pas de meilleur moyen pour décrire la chose que d'entendre ce qu'en dit Ouellette, c'est vraiment l'un des meilleurs exemples de la philosophie de Bette & Gabriel selon lequel la musique folklorique peut vraiment parler de n'importe quoi.

« Cette chanson nous est venue après avoir rencontré un gars de la ville de Québec, qui semblait être un prophète. Après avoir écouté notre set, il a jugé que nous pourrions comprendre son monde. Nous sommes donc allés chez lui et il nous a montré les pyramides de verre qu'il construisait et d'autres objets à utiliser pour entrer en communication avec les extraterrestres et capter les rayons cosmiques. C'était une personne incroyable et nous avons parlé toute la nuit. Après une expérience pareille, il faut écrire une chanson là-dessus. »

Pascal Gemme & Mario Loiselle.

Musique Du Monde (Buda Record)



On peut dire que la quintessence de la musique folk traditionnelle canadienne se trouve dans les airs de violon populaires des Maritimes

et du Québec. Les courants et les tourbillons empruntés par la musique historique écossaise, irlandaise, anglaise et française se mélangent pour créer les sons uniques et admirables de New World. Découvrez les 16 airs choisis sur Violon du Québec, par Pascal Gemme (violon) et Mario Loiselle (piano). Gemme est un maître violoniste dont l'interprétation ajoute des nuances supplémentaires aux airs dans chaque section répétée tandis que Loiselle définit le rythme et la trame de fond musicale. Le produit de leurs talents est un album de violon canadien exceptionnel, rempli de reels. On y tape un peu du pied, on y entend un peu de chant, et on y retrouve sans conteste le plaisir des airs traditionnels québécois. Si vous collectionnez la musique pour violon, cet album est un incontournable. Le livret épais de la pochette raconte l'histoire de chaque morceau. Même le vieux violoneux Gemme en a appris davantage grâce à toutes les notes qu'il contient! Dans les endroits où il avait dévié de la mélodie originale, Gemme a annoté les deux passages avec des notes de musique pour montrer les différences. Les notes de livret sont rarement aussi bien faites et instructives.

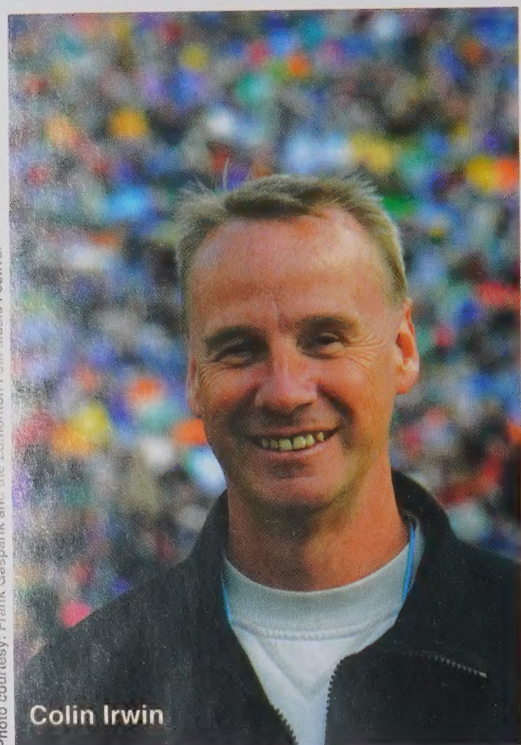
– Par Gene Wilburn,

– Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard



Pascal Gemme & Mario Loiselle

A Point Of View



Colin Irwin

What ever happened to the young musical rebels wired to shock, outrage, and amaze? asks Colin Irwin. Lost to a career-minded, safety-first ideology, it seems. Yet, the hunger for risk still impels such veterans as Martin Carthy and Ry Cooder.

A funny thing happened to me recently. I got old. I think it may have happened when I was trying to interview Van Morrison.

Apparently it comes to us all but I'm not so sure. I mean, age is but a meaningless number, right? Hunger, ambition, and mental agility are what truly count, right? Even in his 90s, Pete Seeger was still at heart a young man, fighting for his various causes, playing benefits, still writing, still declaring his banjo was surrounding hate and forcing it to surrender.

"Hope I die before I get old," stuttered Roger Daltrey, a trillion years ago on *My Generation*, a song that once stood as a mantra for youthful rebellion but is now just an ironic reflection of naïve, down-trodden dreams. Look what happened to the punk movement, that fearless face of anarchy and dissension set up to tear the music industry limb from limb ... it was gobbled up by the major record companies, with spittle, safety pins, and spiky hair as the new designer face of marketing, that's what happened.

The only stars destined to remain forever young seemingly are those—from James Dean to Amy Winehouse—who joined the 27 Club and it's tempting to conjecture how the likes of

Kurt Cobain, Brian Jones, or even, especially, Robert Johnson would have coped artistically into their 60s and beyond had violent death not sealed their eternal legend. Would the 71-year-old Jimi Hendrix (as he would be now) rather embarrassingly still be setting fire to his guitar and howling *Purple Haze* in front of pensionable audiences on retro nights at seaside hotel resorts? Would Janis Joplin still be wielding a bottle of Southern Comfort and terrifying the hounds of hell with screaming vocals or might she by now have found absolution and turned into a singing Mother Teresa? Would we still be in awe and a little afraid of a bald, arthritic 70-year-old Jim Morrison still attempting to light our fires with tight leather trousers covering his paunch?

Those with the too-fast-to-live-too-young-to-die mentality largely operated, of course, in a different musical time zone where everything was up for grabs and it was relatively easy to batter down taboos and subjugate delicate sensibilities in a way that modern artists can't do and are largely unwilling to attempt. It's over half a century since Elvis was filmed from the waist up on *The Ed Sullivan Show* for fear that his pelvic gyrations would subvert a nation and the nearest we get to scaring the grown-ups nowadays is a Miley Cyrus twerk.

But you know you're in trouble when the older generation starts complaining about the young generation being too safe and boring, but it's kind of true. Where are the new young rebels wired to shock, outrage, and amaze ... or even just make you think? Lost to a world of *X Factor* drivel, generic banality, and career-minded safety-first ideology, that's what. All the bright young things with fire in their bellies and hope in their hearts seem genetically sucked into the vacuous glitz of a music industry increasingly programmed to crush the life out of creativity.

Certainly in the U.K. right now there's a lot of talk about the upsurge of a new generation of folk musicians who knock their renowned predecessors into a very large cocked hat in terms of technical ability; yet when it comes to groundbreaking ideas and genuine ingenuity, they haven't got out of the starting gate. Brilliant teenage guitarists, mandolin players, fiddlers, pipers, accordionists ... they are flooding out of every corner, inspired by those great old trailblazing heroes of the 1960s and '70s.

And when you imitate the past you become a pale imitation of it and, while the loose

"You know you're in trouble when the older generation starts complaining about the young generation being too safe and boring."

umbrella of folk music—Mumford & Sons and the like—is enjoying an unfamiliar level of respect and attention, and popularity among the great unwashed, it has the perfect opportunity to make another great leap forwards. Yet nobility of any note appears to be grabbing the baton and flinging it into a different field, and as this current moment in the sun passes the new generation of folk musicians will find they have wasted their golden opportunity to leave a lasting imprint.

In fairness, it's much harder for them. The early pioneers were shooting in the dark with no recourse to history. They created their own history from a blank canvas. They did a fantastic job but nobody—least of all themselves—said this was the only way to do things and they didn't ask or expect to be slavishly copied for years to come or held up in reverential awe. The last thing any of them expected at the time was to make an enduring career out of music.

And it is perhaps significant that, while so many of the current crop come bounding out of colleges intent on launching careers clutching copies of Martin Carthy albums and meticulously attempting to emulate him without an original thought in their heads, the man himself—now a youthful 73—continues to restlessly seek new directions and inspiration. If anyone doubts his hunger for risk then look at his recent work with Imagined Village and his new album, *The Moral Of The Elephant*, with daughter Eliza Carthy, herself an admirable advocate of treating old music "with respect and disrespect it deserves."

Look at the enduring brilliance of Richard Thompson or Peggy Seeger's bold new album *Everything Changes*; and look at the old legends who ferociously sucked in the neck of their belated fame. And think of the Buena Vista Social Club, forgotten and overlooked until Ry Cooder's intervention. And think of all the old, mostly anonymous, unaccompanied folksingers who never did find fame outside their own porches but still sang and played with a passion and love that bequeathed unimaginable treasures of material and character to the revivalists who followed.

Age doesn't kill talent but ego, fame, and fortune generally does.

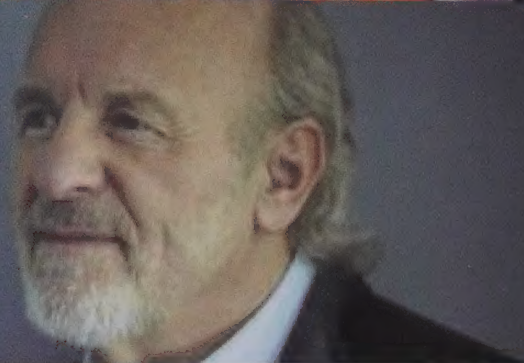
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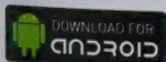
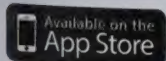
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